

Rain halts city life

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Monipuri Para.

People were seen wading through filthy water reeking of sewerage trying their best to ignore the overpowering stench.

Nizam Rahman, sales representative of a company, told The Daily Star that he tried to keep his mind focused on his destination as he walked through the waterlogged streets of Monipuri Para.

Hundreds of commuters including Eid shoppers were stranded on their way back home as the sudden waterlogging created traffic congestion in the city. "My children and I had to wait for an hour in front of the National Museum as three-wheeler and taxicab drivers refused to go to Farmgate due to flooding", said Nasima Begum, a shopper.

Incessant downpours over the past few days have also inundated the northeast regions of Sylhet, Netrokona and Sunamganj.

Weather experts however turned down possibilities of floods in the country, as there has been 36 percent less rainfall than expected in the last three weeks.

According to the Met office, the actual rainfall recorded this monsoon throughout the country was 6,788 mm, which

is much lower than the anticipated 10,604 mm. Sylhet was the only exception which experienced a 16 percent rise over the projected downpour.

Due to this unusual rainfall in Sylhet division, parts of Sylhet, Netrokona and Sunamganj were inundated, said Arifur Zaman Bhuiyan, assistant engineer of Flood Control Centre.

"We don't run the risk of floods yet, as the waters of Jamuna, Padma and Ganges are still below the danger level", Arifur said adding, the water level will start dropping soon by next week unless the downpour continues.

ACTUAL AND PROJECTED RAINFALL (AUGUST 1 TO 23)

	ACTUAL RAINFALL (in mm)	EXPECTED RAINFALL (in mm)
Dhaka	900	1148
Chittagong	2843	4955
Rajshahi	390	609
Rangpur	736	826
Barisal	439	1280
Khulna	675	1105
Sylhet	784	677

Furnace blows

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with a big bang and the melted iron sprayed around causing the injuries," said Madan Mohan.

The workers were exposed to the melted metal as they did not have any heat-tolerant or protective gear.

OC Kazi Aiyubur Rahman said the cause of the explosion is yet to be known.

In 2008, as many as 1,768 workers were reported killed and over 2,000 injured in accidents at work in different industries, says a newspaper survey.

Centre for Corporate Accountability Bangladesh and some other non-government organisations jointly conducted the study.

In 2000, the International Labour Office estimated that each year 11,700 workers die in Bangladesh in work-related accidents. In 2005, it also estimated that another 28,600 die from diseases caused by the industries they work in and 8.9 million suffer from work-related injuries.

With large number of casualties every year, successive governments just enacted laws but never monitored whether those were implemented.

There is nobody to inspect electric furnaces of steel mills, said steel mill owners.

When asked about any safety inspections, Sheikh Fazlur Rahman, owner of Bikrampur Stell Mills in the city, said, "No factory inspector visits

Shaheed minar

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International Mother Language Day, to show respect to the Language Movement heroes and the mother language.

Advocate Manzill Murshid, lawyer for the petitioner, told The Daily Star that any organisation or individual can hold functions on the Shaheed Minar premises, outside its main Bedi, as per the HC directives.

He said they have filed the writ petition to protect the sanctity and honour of Shaheed Minar, as anti-social activities take place on its premises including its Bedi at night, and thus its sanctity is damaged.

Citing an example, he said nobody is allowed to go to the main Bedi of the Jatiya Smriti Soudha (National Martyrs Memorial) at Savar for protecting its sanctity and dignity.

Anthrax positive

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Several teams of epidemiologists and livestock officials are on alert to find out affected people and animals in the area, he said. Field officers are also being trained to handle the outbreak in Belkuchi, Kamarkhand and Shahjadpur of Sirajganj and Santhia upazila of Pabna.

The outbreak in Sirajganj is the 8th incident in the country in one year, he said last week, adding that the disease was earlier diagnosed in Pabna, Dhaka and other areas, and 99 people were found infected.

Our correspondents from Pabna and Sirajganj report, 24 more people were affected by suspected anthrax in these two districts since Tuesday night.

Sirajganj Civil Surgeon Dr Nurul Islam said at least 20 cattle have so far died of anthrax in the district.

Correction

The news headline "Govt asked to return Tk 397cr to 2 firms" published in The Daily Star yesterday should read "Govt asked to return Tk 297cr to 2 firms". We apologise for the mistake.

BSF kills cattle trader

A CORRESPONDENT, Benapole

A cattle trader was beaten to death by Indian Border Security Force (BSF) along the Puthali frontier in Benapole early Wednesday.

The identity of the victim could not be known immediately.

BSF troops of Puthali camp caught and beat the cattle trader mercilessly while he was returning home from India through the border, leaving him dead on the spot, BDR sources said.

Later, the BSF troops threw the body into the Ichhamoti river.

Indian police took away the body as it was floating on the Indian side of the river, the sources added.

A flag meeting was held between BDR men of Puthali camp and BSF of Angrail camp in this regard, said Emdad Hossain, camp commander of 22 Rifles Battalion.

Army deployed in tense Beirut after clash

AFP, Beirut

Lebanese soldiers deployed in force in tense Beirut yesterday as funerals began for three people killed in a clash between Shiite Hezbollah and a Sunni faction.

The clash between Hezbollah and Al-Ahbash -- both close to Damascus -- broke out late on Tuesday in the mainly Muslim west Beirut district of Burj Abi Haidar, a stronghold of parliament speaker Nabih Berri's Shiite movement Amal, which is allied with Hezbollah.

Information Minister Tarek Mitri said after a scheduled cabinet meeting on Wednesday that the government would form a committee to "remedy the phenomenon of arms in the hands of citizens in all regions across Lebanon".

Tuesday's clashes marked the worst violence to grip Beirut since May 2008, when 100 people were killed in battles between supporters of a Hezbollah-led alliance and those of Lebanon's pro-Western Sunni prime minister, Saad Hariri.

An army spokesman told AFP the situation was calm on Wednesday afternoon, although tanks and foot patrols could be seen across the capital throughout the day.

Bullet casings and broken glass covered Burj Abi Haidar streets on the morning after, as shopkeepers swept away rubble from their stores and most residents stayed indoors. Cars parked nearby were also badly damaged.

Supporters of the two movements used shoulder-fired rocket-propelled grenades and machine-guns in four hours of fighting that erupted at about 7 pm (1600 GMT) Tuesday and also left 11 people wounded.

Chinese firm

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the tender evaluation committee prepared on August 12.

The deadline for submission of bids expired on April 13.

The World Kaihatsu Kogyo Co Ltd quoted Tk 285 crore and Nippon Road Co Ltd Tk 299 crore.

"The CRBC has been selected for repairing the cracks as it quoted Tk 165 crore, about 20 percent less than the estimated cost," said the report of the six-member evaluation committee.

The Bridge Division on August 19 sent a summary to the Executive Committee of the National Economic Council for disbursing funds for the repairs.

A committee of experts headed by Prof Jamilur Reza Chowdhury in 2006 detected cracks in the multipurpose bridge that connects the capital with the country's northern region.

The committee suggested repairing the cracks immediately but the government failed to find a capable firm for the task. Later the government put restrictions on both speed and freight for vehicles crossing the bridge.

South Korean Hyundai Engineering and Construction Co Ltd built the Tk 4,000-crore bridge in 1997 with an expected lifespan of 100 years.

Incineration

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Prof Khan and his team visited the affected regions of Pabna and Sirajganj on Monday and collected swab samples from the infected people and confirmed it to be anthrax after primary examination at the BAU laboratory.

The team of experts included vice-chancellor of BAU Prof Dr M A Sattar Mandal, Head of Medicine Department Professor Dr Siddiqui Rahman, Head of Microbiology and Hygiene Department Dr Sukumar Saha and Chief Medical Officer of BAU Health Center Dr Fayed Ahmed.

The team is now conducting other tests including the 'antibiotic sensitivity' of the disease to determine whether penicillin or ciprofloxacin would be more effective to cure the disease.

The outbreak in Sirajganj is the 8th incident in the country in one year, said Mahmudur Rahman, director of the Institute of Epidemiology Disease Control and Research (IEDCR), adding that the disease was earlier diagnosed in Pabna, Dhaka and

other areas, and 99 people were found infected.

"But there is nothing to worry as the disease is curable and the treatment is available in the country. Anthrax doesn't spread directly from one infected animal or person to another," he told The Daily Star last week.

The first anthrax outbreak in the country was detected in 2004. Since then people across the country have been infected almost every year.

According to the Wikipedia, anthrax is an acute disease caused by the bacteria Bacillus anthracis. It commonly infects wild and domesticated mammals, which ingest or inhale the spores while grazing.

Affected animals can spread anthrax to humans, either by direct contact (e.g. inoculation of infected blood to broken skin) or consumption of a diseased animal's meat.

Most forms of the disease are lethal, and it affects both humans and other animals. There are effective vaccines against anthrax, and some forms of the disease respond well to antibiotic treatment.

ICU too costly

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ventilator and Tk 4,500 seat rent.

Director of the Holy Family Hospital Shirajul Islam said they earn minimum profit from the hospital and the money received from patients is used for salary and maintenance.

The four-bed ICU at city's Care Hospital charges Tk 6,000 for daily seat rent, syringe pump and cardiac monitor. A patient has to count Tk 12,000 all-inclusive daily charge for ICU facilities, hospital sources say.

Assistant Director (Medical Services) of the hospital Dr GM Suman said many hospitals show reduced seat rent but take extra charges for other services.

"Some hospitals are making profit through ICU services as there are few or no patients in the general wards," he added.

A group of doctors say some private hospitals have agents who ask the doctors to refer patients to them. A doctor gets Tk 2,000 in commission for sending a patient to a selected hospital and Tk 500 per day for ICU service, they allege.

Mujibur Rahman who has recently retired from the post of director (hospital) of the Directorate General of Health Services said the government

NGOs charging

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among the poor people at much lower rate. "The loan is also collateral free," she added.

Hasina said both Bangladesh and China aimed at uplifting the nation free from poverty. "We both are working for poverty alleviation."

PM's Press Secretary Abul Kalam Azad briefed the reporters about the meeting.

Hasina said China had achieved remarkable socioeconomic development defying the recent worldwide economic meltdown and this achievement should be followed by others. "We have to learn from you," the PM told the Chinese leader.

She said that the main aim of her party and the government is to eradicate poverty from the country and ensure a better economic life for its people.

Referring to China's achievement in producing high yield rice and crops, the PM said that Bangladesh could get knowledge from China in producing more rice and crops from the same land.

Fan Xiaojian praised Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's leadership, poverty alleviation and women empowerment. He especially praised the 'one house, one farm' project of the government.

He said that the vision 2021 is very good one and China gave importance in this vision.

Fan said the relation between the two friendly countries is excellent and China would remain beside Bangladesh in poverty alleviation and economic development of the people.

Chinese Ambassador Zhang Xianyi, Ambassador at-large M Ziauddin and PMO Secretary Molla Waheeduzzaman were present during the meeting.

has little or almost no monitoring of the private hospitals.

"No service charges have been fixed yet. Even the private hospital ordinance does not say anything about the ceiling of service charges," he said.

Iqbal Hossain Dipu, 18, an HSC student of Kobi Nazrul Govt College, was admitted to the ICU of Rushmono General Hospital in Maghbazar on April 9 for head injury.

"A broker of Dhaka Medical College Hospital lured us here. He said my son's treatment cost would be Tk 5,000 maximum. But after staying here for 25 days I got a bill of Tk 2.86 lakh," said Dipu's father Abdul Mannan Fakir, a rickshaw puller from Maniknagar in Sabujbagh.

"I sold all four rickshaws and my village property and took loans to manage Tk 1.13 lakh. The hospital is pressing me for the rest. But I am totally broke," the man cried out.

Afsana, a student of class seven, was receiving treatment at the 10-bed ICU of BSMMU Hospital for two months. Her mother Salma Nasreen said she spent Tk 12,000 every day on average. "Still the amount is far less than that of the United Hospital where my daughter was admitted for 15 days. We had to spend Tk 40,000 every day for the same facilities."

If there were sufficient ICU services at all public hospitals at district level, poor patients might not face such bitter experience, experts say.

Jamaat city

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Rafiqul Islam and then show him arrested in one of those.

Earlier on August 23, Rafiqul Islam got anticipatory bails in six cases on charges of obstructing police in discharging their duties and hurting religious sentiment of Muslims.

Jamaat Ameer Motiur Rahman Nizami and its Secretary General Ali Ahsan Muhammad Mojahid are now behind bars after being arrested in several cases.

Jamaat yesterday demanded unconditional and immediate release of the city unit Jamaat chief.

Jamaat, in a press release signed by its publicity secretary Nurul Islam Bulbul, alleged that police arrested Rafiqul Islam illegally in violation of the court order.

Meanwhile, a team of plainclothes DB police went to the residence of former Jamaat chief Ghulam Azam in Baro Moghbazar yesterday around 3:00pm and interrogated the security guards of the building.

Ismail Hossain, a security guard of the building, said the DB men questioned them about the whereabouts of Ghulam Azam and stayed at the building for about three hours.

DB ADC Mahmudur Rahman, however, refuted the security guard's claim.

Nazmul Huq, Ghulam Azam's personal secretary, said, "Intelligence people are always seen around the house."

The International Crimes Tribunal started investigating the war crimes charges against the ex-Jamaat chief.

Outlaw killed in 'shootout' with Rab

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

A leader of Purbo Banglar Communist Party (PBCP) was killed in a 'shootout' between Rapid Action Battalion and his cohorts in Bagmara upazila early Wednesday.

The deceased Elahi Baksh Mithu, 40, of Baje Goalkandi village was the regional commander of Purba Banglar Communist Party (ML-Lal Potaka) unit in Chapainawabganj.

A Rab member, Havildar M Abdul Wahab, was also injured in the incident, says a press release.

Tipped off that PBCP cadres, who were behind police killing and arms looting incident of Dhalur Char in Pabna, were planning similar attack on Bagmara police, a team led by ASP Shahjahan of Rab-5 Bagmara camp raided Bagicha Goalkandi area at about 3:00am where the group was holding a clandestine meeting.

Sensing presence of the elite force, the gang opened fire forcing them to fire back that triggered a ten-minute 'gunfight'.

Later, Rab men found Mithu's bullet hit body lying on the ground.

His cohorts, however, managed to flee the scene.

A 7.65mm USA-made pistol, three bullets, one magazine, three sharp weapons and two leaflets were recovered from the spot.

Mithu was accused in three cases including one for Taherpur police murder, said the Rab.

BNP to defy

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announcement is against democracy and fundamental rights of people. Our demonstration will be held today on time," said Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir, BNP's joint secretary general, while talking to reporters at party's central office in Nayapalton.

BNP city unit leader Abdus Salam said they have taken permission from the City Corporation and police for using microphone during the demonstration.

On August 23, Dhaka Metropolitan Police imposed a ban on holding meeting, rally, demonstration and procession on the important roads in the city without permission.

But BNP leaders said they will stage demonstration at 11:00am at Muktangan as per their earlier announcement.

Alamgir said the government is trying to hide its failure by blaming the opposition. The prime minister and ministers are making confusing statements about the August 21 grenade attack.

"BNP wants neutral investigation of the grenade attack incident but the government is blaming the opposition with a political motive," Alamgir added.

He also criticised the prime minister's recent remark about why Khaleda Zia did not visit her sons abroad if they were really sick.

Alamgir said Khaleda Zia did not go abroad considering the political situation of the country.

Wearing veil

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be considered as "misconduct", said the circular, signed by Education Secretary Syed Ataur Rahman.

No female student can be repressed, harassed or given any punishment for not wearing veil, the circular added.

It also directed the heads of the educational institutions and their management committees to take necessary steps in this regard.

Asked whether the directive would be applicable for madrasas, Education Minister Nurul Islam Nahid told The Daily Star that the circular is applicable to all educational institutions including madrasas.

The circular was issued following the news items published in different newspapers saying that women students were forced to wear veils and religious dresses at some government and private educational institutions across the country.

The departments, directorates or education boards under the education ministry will take legal actions through investigation if any complaint concerning violation of the directive is found, it said.

Earlier on August 22, the High Court issued a suo moto order directing the government to ensure that no woman is forced to wear veil or religious attire at the educational institutions and offices across the country.

Presidential ordinances

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dissolved.

The 5th amendment to the constitution ratified all actions of that martial law regime between August 15, 1975 and April 9, 1979.

Now with the Supreme Court's recent nullification of the 5th amendment, the changes brought to the original article 93 also became void.

Eminent jurist Shahdeen Malik told The Daily Star recently, "It means the wholesale power of the president to promulgate ordinances will not exist anymore when the parliament will stand dissolved, except on financial matters."

He said through the cancellation of the amendment to article 93, the parliament's legislative power has become consolidated and unrivalled.

A bloody coup on August 15, 1975 overthrew the first elected government of the nascent independent country, and the subsequent extra-constitutional martial law

regime dissolved the first elected parliament on November 6, 1975.

Between August 15, 1975 and April 9, 1979 around 100 ordinances were promulgated by Khandaker Moshataque Ahmed, Justice MA Sayem, and Ziaur Rahman, who successively grabbed the office of the president unconstitutionally.

Promulgation of presidential ordinances continued afterwards as well. Military ruler HM Ershad, who grabbed the state power on March 24, 1981 overthrowing the then elected president Justice Abdus Sattar promulgated around 80 ordinances till 1986.

The immediate past president, during almost two years of the last caretaker government led by Fakhruddin Ahmed, promulgated 119 ordinances including some on financial matters.

The caretaker government led by Justice Latifur Rahman in 2001 also promulgated few presidential ordinances.

Ershad era

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The lawyers concerned of the petition said Ershad's future depends on this verdict.

A number of lawyers told The Daily Star yesterday that the seventh amendment might have the same fate as the 5th amendment, as the state lent support to the petition.

During yesterday's hearing on the petition, lawyers of the state side and petitioner told the court that HM Ershad had committed a criminal offence by taking over the state power by illegal means and he should be prosecuted and punished under the existing law.

Additional Attorney General MK Rahman argued that the constitution has not given any mandate to anybody to take over the state power and promulgate martial law and regulations. All decrees and orders under martial law are illegal, he said.

At that point the bench asked the additional attorney general about the fate of the usurpers who assumed power through martial law.

In reply, MK Rahman said HM Ershad or any other person who have captured the state powers by illegal means should be prosecuted and punished under the applicable laws, as even the parliament, which is sovereign, has not the power to ratify any martial law as per the constitution.

The Supreme Court in its verdict on the fifth amendment has disapproved the promulgation of martial law and regulations, he added.

The fifth amendment had ratified all changes made to the constitution between August 15, 1975, and April 9, 1979, giving legitimacy to the regimes of Khandker Moshataque Ahmed, Abu Sadaat Mohammad Sayem and Major General Ziaur Rahman.

Petitioner's lawyer Hassan SM Azim told the court that HM Ershad had committed an act of fraudulence against the constitution, parliament and the people of the country by introducing the seventh amendment.

As the chief of the Army, general Ershad had snatched the state powers from the then president, which is similar to a mutiny, he said.

Ershad had committed the

most heinous criminal offence and should be prosecuted and awarded the highest punishment, said the petitioner's counsel, adding that no act against the original spirit of the constitution can be condoned.

The highest punishment for mutiny against the president is death penalty.

Siddique, in his petition, said martial law and the rules and orders under it are illegal in the eyes of the constitution of Bangladesh.

He sought for a direction upon the government to arrange retrial of the case in which he was convicted and sentenced.

In response, the HC on April 5 this year, granted Siddique bail and issued a rule directing the government to explain why the seventh amendment to the constitution should not be adjudged illegal.

Publish ads

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On the same day, the court took into cognisance the charges against 801 BDR personnel, and 23 civilians in connection with the carnage.

A total of 2,307 people have been arrested so far in connection with the mutiny, all except 25 taken on remand, and 543 gave confessional statements.

On July 12, the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) indicted 824 BDR soldiers and civilians for 24 criminal charges in the mutiny.

Former BNP lawmaker Nasiruddin Ahmed Pintu and Awami League leader Torab Ali were among the civilians accused for assisting the mutineers to flee.

Later, CID also submitted another charge sheet against 807 BDR personnel and one civilian in the case filed under the Explosive Substances Act.

The 21 fugitives asked to appear before the court are sepoys Mohiuddin, Kamrul Hassan-1, Rezaul Karim, Palton Chakma, Mizanur Rahman, Mokbul Hossain-1, Kamrul Hassan-2, Al Mamun, Baqui Billah, Hasibul Hassan, Atiqur Rahman, Saidullah, Meshbah UI, Mohammad Selim, Nurul Alam, Mokbul Hossain-2, Abdullah Al Mamun, Anusur Rahman, Wahidur Ali, Kamrul Islam, and Lance Nayek Hamidul Islam.

Removal order

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Bangladesh (ISPA), told The Daily Star it would be quite impossible for them to go for underground cable networking within the deadline