

Bangladesh off

FROM PAGE 1

regulations on issuing operation licence to airlines, surveillance on air operators, airworthiness and maintaining proper documentation, increasing manpower and logistics of both Caab and other airline operators, said Caab officials.

"We have received a letter from ICAO. It was sent on July 19 saying Bangladesh had been dropped from the list of countries with significant safety concern," said Wing Commander SM Nazmul Anam, Caab director of flight safety and regulation.

"We managed to satisfy ICAO with an all-out effort to comply with their instructions to ensure safety in flight operations," said Anam.

Quoting from the ICAO letter, he said "The collective actions of Caab in addressing and resolving the safety threats were found satisfactory."

Some European countries and Singapore restricted Caab-certified airlines from using most of their airports as Bangladesh was on the list of countries with significant safety concerns.

Those airlines could not increase flight frequency in the European countries for the last three years and had to use designated airports for aircraft landing and take-off. Moreover, GMG had been barred from using Singapore airport.

Caab officials said the

airlines would have faced further restrictions from European countries in the future if ICAO had not excluded Bangladesh from the list. Several European countries have already warned that they will impose restrictions on flights from blacklisted countries.

Bangladesh was included on the list in May 2009 when the country failed to come clean through an ICAO inspection.

The latest ICAO decision comes after two consecutive audits by the global aviation watchdog's experts to evaluate Bangladesh's initiatives toward ensuring safety in flight operations.

The audits were carried out between June 21 and June 27, and July 9 and July 11.

The team scrutinised Caab's performance and efforts in five areas -- air worthiness, personnel licensing, legislation, and operational and organisational activities.

Caab faced a tough inspection and a total of 304 protocol questions.

The audit team also monitored various aspects such as issuing operation licence to airlines, surveillance on air operators, airworthiness, documentation, manpower and logistics of both Caab and other air operators.

Caab Assistant Director Prashanta Kumar Chakraborty said, "Now, Caab's certification to local

airlines will be recognised as international compliance certification."

Imran Asif, chief executive officer of Regent Airways, said the decision would help bring in more business for local airlines, as they were likely to get permission to operate flights on new international routes.

"It's very hard to run an airline with only domestic operations. Now we hope to get permission to fly international routes and a chance to benefit more from the investments on workforce and infrastructure."

"This decision will also help boost the growth of the aviation industry has achieved in recent years," he said.

Youth dies

FROM PAGE 20

hailed from Netrakona.

Sitakunda police said he fell from Dhaka-bound Turna Nishitha near Kothakol School in Debar Pararea around 1:00am.

Dr Bibekananda Chakraborty, deputy assistant medical officer of Sitakunda Upzila Health Complex, said local people and police brought Ujjal with injuries to the heels around 1:30am. The victim also suffered internal bleeding, he added.

Ujjal was rushed to Chittagong Medical College Hospital around 2:10am where he was declared dead by the emergency unit's on-duty doctor, said Constable Mrinal Dey of CMCH police outpost.

One missing as Philippines hit by floods

AFP, Manila

One person was missing in the Philippines as heavy rains inundated parts of Manila and nearby areas with knee-deep floodwaters yesterday, the authorities said.

The civil defence office told residents to prepare to evacuate as creeks and open sewers in the capital overflowed from overnight rains, swamping nearby slums as well as roads and causing traffic jams.

"Low-lying, flood-prone regions in (Manila and nearby provinces) are advised to take precaution. Usual high risk areas to flood are advised to evacuate residents," the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council said.

Local officials in the metropolis of 14 million declared a school holiday as floodwaters rose to knee-high in some areas, but no large-scale evacuations have been made so far.

The council said a man fell into a river and was carried off by strong currents in Lumban, a town near Manila, late Friday and remained missing.

Manila and nearby areas were pounded by torrential rainfall of more than 40 millimetres (1.6 inches) an hour early yesterday, said state weather forecaster Genie Quilong.

While a storm was passing off the country's north coast, the bad weather in the capital was mostly caused by a seasonal monsoon, he told AFP.

The Binga dam in the northern Philippines released water as a precaution against a possible overflow, but other dams were still well below critical level, state flood forecaster Jimmy Enriquez told AFP.

Afghan Taliban lash men in public

AFP, Puli Alam

Taliban militants lashed two men in public yesterday, witnesses and officials said, just weeks after a video surfaced of a woman being executed for adultery before a crowd of cheering men.

The men received 40 lashes each with a leather whip in front of more than a hundred people in Shash Qala village of Charkh district in Logar province, some 70 kilometres south of the capital Kabul.

They were arrested by Taliban insurgents while trying to kidnap the son of a rich man three days earlier, Bashir, a villager, told AFP.

Charkh district chief Farooq Humayun said the local administration was aware of the incident and an investigation was underway.

A local Taliban commander in the area, who did not want to be named, told AFP that they had carried out the punishment to establish sharia law in the country.

Public punishments and executions were common when the Taliban regime was in power from 1996 until 2001, when they were ousted by a US-led invasion and launched an insurgency against the Western-backed government," said a senior official at the home ministry.

Though the killing of innocent Bangladeshi citizens reduced in the recent months, Dhaka wants a complete end to the killings. Eleven Bangladeshi have been killed by BSF between January and June this year, according to home ministry figures.

Meanwhile, officials at the foreign and water resources ministries have expressed their dismay as the Indian side was yet to form an expert committee to conduct a joint survey at the proposed Tipaimukh dam site to assess its possible adverse impact on Bangladesh.

In February this year, Bangladesh formed an expert committee when there was an indication that the expert committees of both the countries will sit for discussion in New Delhi in June with a view to conduct the survey during the monsoon.

Bazlur Rahman, company commander at Karigao outpost of Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB), confirmed the incident.

Vice President Monique Ohsan Bellepeau filed in until Puryag, 64, the former president of the National Assembly, was sworn in yesterday in the presence of both Ramgoolam and Berenger.

The ACC was being used only to give clean chits to the government, he said yesterday while addressing the opposition.

Reiterating the party's stance on the construction

of the Padma bridge, Fakhru said the bridge should be constructed with World Bank funds. If the government tries to build the bridge with its own funds, it will create an extra burden on the people.

The WB recently cancelled its credit for the bridge, citing a corruption conspiracy in the project.

The government should "take stern actions against corrupt persons and talk to the World Bank to ensure loan for the bridge," Fakhru said.

Former vice-chancellor of Dhaka University Prof Emajuddin Ahmed, Bangla daily Amar Desh editor Mahmudur Rahman and Shawkat Mahmud, general secretary of a faction of Bangladesh Federal Union of Journalists, among others, were present there.

Meanwhile, BNP standing committee member Moudud Ahmed renewed his allegation that the government was using the police and the Anti-Corruption Commission to subdue the opposition.

"The human rights situation in the country now is worse than ever," Fakhru said. Political repression and harassment, disappearance of political leaders, and human rights violations had been increasing day by day.

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Shooter loner

FROM PAGE 20

The biggest mystery surrounding the 24-year-old doctoral student was why he would have pulled on a gas mask and shot dozens of people early Friday in a suburban Denver movie theatre, as police allege.

In the age of widespread social media, no trace of Holmes could be found on Facebook, LinkedIn, MySpace, Twitter or anywhere on the Web. Either he never engaged or he scrubbed his trail.

A longtime neighbour in San Diego, where Holmes grew up, remembers only a "shy guy ... a loner" from a churchgoing family. In addition to playing soccer at Westview High School, he ran cross country.

A federal law enforcement official, speaking on condition of anonymity because of the ongoing probe into the rampage, said Holmes bought four guns from retailers in the past two months.

Holmes is not talking to police and has asked for a lawyer, according to a law enforcement official briefed on the investigation. The official spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss the case. Police found jars of chemicals in Holmes' booby-trapped apartment with wires nearby, the law enforcement official said.

When he surrendered weekly in the movie house parking lot, Holmes told authorities what he'd done at his residence in the Denver suburb of Aurora, the third most populous city in Colorado.

"Our hearts go out to those who were involved in this tragedy and to the families and friends of those involved," Holmes' family said in a statement Friday.

A high-volume drum magazine was attached to the rifle, an assault weapon, the official said. Aurora Police Chief Dan Oates said that a 100-round drum magazine for the rifle was recovered from the scene.

"I'm told by experts that with that drum magazine, he could have gotten off 50 to 60 rounds, even if it was semi-automatic, within one minute," Oates said at a news conference. "And as far as we know, it was a pretty rapid pace of fire in that theatre."

Julie Adams, whose son played junior varsity soccer with Holmes, said her son remembered little about the suspect, which was unusual for the tight-knit team.

"I don't think many of the kids (team-mates) knew him. He was kind of a loner," she said.

Jackie Mitchell, a furniture mover who lives several blocks from the suspect's apartment building in Colorado, said he had drinks with Holmes at a bar on Tuesday night, though he showed no sign of distress or

to New York City Police Commissioner Ray Kelly, who said he had been briefed on the matter.

Authorities say Holmes arrived at the theatre dressed in black, outfitted in a gas mask, ballistic helmet, vest and leggings, black tactical gloves and protectors on his throat and groin.

He was armed with an assault-style rifle, a shotgun and Glock handgun.

Police said he started his attack by tossing two gas canisters into the theatre, where he had bought a ticket for the midnight showing of "The Dark Knight Rises," the new Batman movie.

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