

Storm kills two girls in capital

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Two minor girls were killed and six others, including a baby, injured during a storm in the capital yesterday evening.

The dead are Karishma, 5, of Rampura, and Raimoni, 8, of Dakkhin Keraniganj.

Karishma died when a portion of an under-construction building fell on a tin-shed house in Rampura, said Moniruzzaman, sub-inspector of

Rampura Police Station.

A baby was also injured in the incident.

They were rushed to Dhaka Medical College Hospital where doctors declared Karishma dead.

In Keraniganj, Raimoni died after the tin roof of the top floor of a two-storey house collapsed on her, said Monirul Islam, officer-in-charge of Dakkhin Keraniganj Police Station.

Five others were also hurt in the incident, he added.

HABIGANJ 4-KID MURDER SI suspended for negligence

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Moulvibazar

A sub-inspector has been suspended and action has been recommended against an officer-in-charge for negligence in duty in connection with the murder of four children in Habiganj.

Talking to The Daily Star, Superintendent of Police Joydeb Kumar Bhadra of Habiganj yesterday said SI Ziaur Rahman had been suspended.

The SP added that strict action was recommended against OC (investigation) Abdur Rahman of Bahubal Police

Station.

A probe body, led by ASP Shahidul Islam, yesterday submitted its report in which the suspension and punitive actions were recommended, he said.

The district police formed the investigation committee on February 22 to probe the alleged negligence in finding the children, aged between seven and 10, after they had gone missing.

The police recovered their bodies from a ditch in Shundratuiki village under Bahubol upazila on February 17, five days after they went missing.

India tame tail-up Tigers

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Dhoni finished the chase in style when he lofted a full toss cleanly over the midwicket boundary to ensure India's Asia Cup title for sixth time but before that he lofted a full ball inside out over cover in a way that will remain in the mind for a long time.

India's batting credit however must go to man-of-the-match Shikhar Dhawan and Virat Kohli who shared a 94-run second-wicket stand after Al-Amin gave the home side an early breakthrough by removing Rohit Sharma in the second over. Dhawan made his career-best 60 off 44 balls while Kohli was there in the end unbeaten on 41 to celebrate the victory in the middle along with his skipper.

Bangladesh's bowling was also not at its best and their ploy to attack with a four-pronged pace attack did not make any impact.

Earlier, brilliant sunshine all through the day suggested that perfect weather would greet a much-anticipated clash in the Asia Cup T20 final, but suddenly a storm arrived to take centre stage in the drama, much like a sudden storm of sixes changes the complexion of a T20 match.

In the end cricket and its aficionados however emerged triumphant with Mashrafe Bin Mortaza and MS Dhoni walking to the middle for the toss two hours after the scheduled start amid deafening applause from the capacity crowd.

Dhoni claimed batting second was an advantage in a shortened game after winning the toss and his bowlers justified their skipper's decision before Riyadh seized the initiative by mercilessly punishing the Indian bowlers during his unbeaten 33, which featured two fours and as many sixes. The cameo took the Tigers to 120 for five.

One-down Sabbir Rahman had

also contribution with the bat during 29-ball 32 but he missed out on the late charge.

Tamim Iqbal and Soumya Sarkar made a good start, if not a flying one. The two Southpaws smashed some brilliant boundaries, charging Ashish Nehra brutally, but the left-arm seamer exacted revenge by removing Soumya for 14 in the fourth over. The length was not short enough but Soumya tried to slog it off the front foot over midwicket but mistimed it horribly to be caught at mid-off.

Tamim was quick to follow his partner in the next over as Jasprit Bumrah trapped the experienced left-hander in front. Tamim swung across the line at a good-length ball but missed and was hit flush on the pad to bring a promoted Shakib Al Hasan to the middle, but the left-hander was dismissed after hitting three boundaries during his 16-ball 21. Shakib's slog sweep against spinner Ravichandran Ashwin landed in short fine leg's hands. The loss of regular wickets saw Bangladesh restricted to 68 runs for three wickets in 10 overs.

Mushfiqur Rahim's batting woes continued as the right-hander fell victim of a run-out for a 5-ball 4 and then Mashrafe came ahead of the inform Riyadh in a bid to repeat his heroics in the Pakistan match but he was dismissed for a first-ball duck and the eventual total would need some extraordinary bowling to defend against a formidable Indian batting line-up.

India however should be grateful for the incredible drainage system and hardworking ground staff in Mirpur, apart from the sporting crowd, as it took only one hour to prepare the ground after one hour of incessant rain.

Unsolicited deal

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million cubic feet per day (mmcf) gas. But the Shahbazpur field, which is not connected to the national gas network due to its location, is presently producing 17 to 18 mmcf. Five months back, it was producing three times more gas.

According to a senior Petrobangla official, the current situation resulted after one of the three gas-producing wells of the field stopped production.

"Work is underway to increase production," the official said adding that Petrobangla has given assurance to the PDB about supplying gas to the proposed new plant.

Bangladesh petroleum exploration company (Bapex) had discovered the Shahbazpur gas field in Bhola in 1994. It remained largely unutilised as the island is not connected to the national gas grid. The Bhola plant was built last year at a cost of Tk 2,000 crore to utilise the gas, and it is using a power transmission line installed across the Meghna to supply power to the national grid.

Indian Shapoorji Pallonji Infrastructure Capital Company had been trying to hammer out a deal on a power project since 2014. Initially, it proposed to transfer an installed but unused power plant from Uttarakhhand of India to Sirajganj.

Early last year, the company initiated a move to set up the plant in Bhola using gas from the Shahbazpur field.

Though the PDB was reluctant to accept the proposal, its officials visited the plant in Uttarakhhand and gave a conditional nod to the project in August last year.

By that time, Shapoorji Pallonji modified its plan (as the unused plant in Uttarakhhand began operation) and proposed to build a new dual fuel 220 MW plant in Bhola.

Now the PDB has recommended awarding the new power plant under the special act for speedy implementation of power and energy projects to bypass the open tendering process.

"We have separate power tariffs for gas- and petroleum-based generation," said a PDB high official. "If gas is available from Shahbazpur, the plant would run on gas. Otherwise, it would be an oil-based plant."

The proposal to award this contract will be sent to the Cabinet Purchase Committee soon, he added.

The country's present daily demand is close to 8000 MW, while it now generates 7600 MW. The demand is expected to shoot up by several hundred megawatts within a couple of months.



A depressed Selim Uddin sitting in his watermelon field in Nayabel of Sylhet. This tasty fruit has not grown to its full size in the region due to poor quality seeds and inclement weather. Selim is worried he would not be able to recover the production cost. The photo was taken recently. PHOTO: SHEIKH NASIR

Historic March 7 today

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25, just 18 days after the 7th March speech, the Pakistani military launched genocide on innocent unarmed Bangalis, the most gruesome and shameful act the human history has ever seen.

Shortly before his arrest on the black night, Bangabandhu proclaimed the independence.

To mark the day, different political parties and socio-cultural organisations have chalked out various programmes, including laying wreaths at the portrait of Bangabandhu and holding discussions and rallies.

The ruling Awami League will hoist national and party flags atop the Bangabandhu Bhaban and party offices, and place wreaths at Sheikh Mujib's portrait on

Bangabandhu Bhaban premises in the capital's Dhanmondi in the morning.

The party will hold a rally at Suhrawardy Udyan at 3:00pm. Awami League President and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina will preside over the rally.

President Abdul Hamid and PM Sheikh Hasina gave separate messages marking the day.

The president said the historic March 7 address of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman would remain a perennial source of inspiration for the nation, reports BSS.

He recalled Bangabandhu with profound respect, and said the Bangalis have got an independent and sovereign state in 1971 because of the extraordinary leadership of

Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

His March 7 speech was the charter of freedom for the Bangali nation, the president observed.

Bangabandhu's declaration of "the struggle this time is a struggle for independence" was in fact a call for independence of the country, Abdul Hamid said, adding that as a sequel to this, the Father of the Nation proclaimed the independence on March 26, 1971.

In her message, Sheikh Hasina said Bangabandhu's March 7 historic speech had inspired the Bangali nation to get prepared for the freedom struggle with arms, reports BSS.

To face the enemies, Bangabandhu directed the countrymen to be ready with whatever they had for the freedom struggle, she said.

The PM said the day is a memorable one in the thousand-year history of the Bangali nation as Bangabandhu on this day in 1971 made a clarion call to the people to fight for liberation.

Hasina noted that the political analysts across the world rated the March 7 speech as one of the most excellent speeches so far delivered by world leaders.

She said the necessity and aspiration for the emergence of a state were reflected in every fold of the speech.

"The directives given by Bangabandhu in this speech were the basic elements of the national unity at that time," she said, adding that this historic speech was the source of enormous strength for the nation during the Liberation War.

Diatribes against CJ continue

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international lobbyists to obstruct the trial.

Quasem may be in the condemned cell, but his money is spinning outside and he is hatching a conspiracy, the minister alleged. "We will remain on the street on March 8 [tomorrow] like we did during pronouncements of other verdicts."

'NOT RIGHT AT ALL'

The Liberation War minister went even further, saying the chief justice should not be delivering the verdict in Quasem's case.

"You [the CJ] are the top judge of the country. You consider it yourself if it will be logical for you to deliver the verdict after making such comments. In my view, it will not be right at all," a private television quoted Mozammel as telling a discussion organised by Bangabandhu Sangskritik Jote yesterday.

On Saturday, Qamrul demanded that the appeal in Quasem's case be reheard by a reconstituted Appellate Division bench, keeping the chief justice out of it. He added the CJ in an open court made some observations that raised questions about the prosecutors and investigators' role in the trial.

Speaking at the same programme, the Liberation War minister said if the CJ had indeed made such comments, as a judge and responsible citizen, he must as well know the remedy.

THE CJ'S COMMENTS

On February 24, a five-member bench of the Appellate Division headed by the CJ completed hearing on Quasem's appeal and fixed March 8 for its judgment.

During the hearing of the appeal on

February 23, the chief justice expressed dissatisfaction over the poor performance of the prosecutors and investigators in dealing with the war crimes cases.

The top judge of the country observed that a huge amount of money was being spent on the prosecutors and investigators, but they did not handle and investigate the cases properly.

Justice Sinha had also told the attorney general that the judges were shocked to note that the prosecutors appeared before the media to make statements immediately after a session of the case proceedings at the tribunal.

'UNCONSTITUTIONAL, UNEXPECTED'

In his reaction, the attorney general said the two ministers' comments were unconstitutional and uncalled for, and urged all not to make any undesirable comment about the chief justice to keep the judiciary above controversy.

The CJ is the head of the judiciary and if he is made controversial, the entire judiciary will be affected, the AG told reporters at his office when asked to comment on the two ministers' remarks.

He requested all to wait for the apex court's verdict in Quasem's case.

Later in the day, the top state lawyer told the BBC Bangla, "Such comments by the ministers have damaged the judiciary and such remarks against the judiciary are unprecedented."

Talking about the Jamaat leader's case, Law Minister Anisul Huq said, "When I was a lawyer, I never made any

comments on sub judge matter. Today I am the law minister. If I make any comments on a sub judge matter, it would be a bad precedent."

Asked about the comments of the two ministers, he said they perhaps expressed their own views and that he did not want to make any comment about it.

'THREAT TO JUDICIARY'

The Supreme Court Bar Association called on the apex court to take legal actions against the two ministers for their comments.

The ministers' remarks on a sub judge matter are a threat to the judiciary, SCBA President Khandker Mahub Hossain told a press conference at the association auditorium.

He hoped the SC would act in this regard to uphold the image of the judiciary.

Replying to a query, Mahub said the Appellate Division may initiate contempt of court proceedings against the two ministers.

SCBA Secretary AM Mahub Uddin Khokon demanded removal of the two ministers, saying they broke their oath of office by violating the constitution through making those comments.

The BNP, meanwhile, termed the ministers' comments "extremely audacious and political hooliganism".

"The way Food Minister Qamrul Islam and Liberation War Affairs Minister AKM Mozammel Haque asked the chief justice to quit is a naked interference in the judiciary. Their comments have once again proved that the one-party Baksal system of 1975 has been revived with its all aggressive

features," said BNP Joint Secretary General Ruhul Kabir Rizvi.

Talking to reporters at the party's central office, he said the comments by Qamrul and Mozammel were tantamount to contempt of court.

According to the BNP leader, the ruling AL is restoring to threats and intimidations after failing to establish a full control over the judiciary.

Erratum

In a news report headlined "Shine, Always" yesterday, we inadvertently wrote, "Certificates and medals were conferred on eight students who got the highest five A's in the A-level," and "With 11 A's in one seating, Taaseen Rahman of International Turkish Hope School received special recognition in the O-level category."

Actually, it should be "five A*s" and "11 A*s". We regret the error.

Star editor

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reports, based on information given by the Taskforce Interrogation Cell during the 2007-08 caretaker government rule, without being able to verify those independently.

Of the 79 cases filed in 53 districts, 17 are pleas for bringing sedition charges against Anam. A total of Tk 132,811 crore has been claimed as compensation in the complaints.

The cases against the Star editor have drawn condemnation from local and foreign journalists and their unions as well as human rights bodies.

Son all too lonely as mother also departs

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-- one-year-old Zayan Bin Newaz, Zarif Bin Newaz, 9, and Sharlin Bin Newaz, 14 -- were burnt. They were rushed to the DMCH burn unit.

Zayana and Sharlin died there later that day. Shahnawaz, a maintenance engineer at the US embassy in Dhaka, succumbed to his burns a day later.

With Sumaiya's death yesterday, Zarif is the lone survivor of the incident. He had six percent of his body burnt and now he needs skin grafting.

"We will soon get him admitted to a hospital after his mother's burial," said Quamrul Ahsan, Sumaiya's brother-in-law.

The mother had not said anything about the child's custody

before her death, according to Nazmus Sakib, a nephew of Shahnawaz.

"Family members of Shahnawaz and Sumaiya will sit together to decide about Zarif's custody," he said.

According to Sumaiya's wish, she would be buried at her family graveyard at Nabogram in Barisal Sadar upazila. Her children too were buried there but Shahnawaz was laid to rest at his native village in Jhalakathi, said Quamrul.

He told The Daily Star that Sumaiya's condition started deteriorating on Saturday evening.

"Towards the last stage, she would speak about her hope of recovery. She even told us that she would perform Hajj if she fully

recovered. But that was not to be," Quamrul said.

"Lying in the hospital bed, Sumaiya told us how her neighbours refused to help them when they, still on fire, ran from one door to another in the apartment building, seeking help. But the neighbours had shut the doors on their face.

"Only if one of them had provided a blanket to wrap around their burning bodies, things could have been different, Sumaiya lamented," said Quamrul, who works as a manager at a private security firm.

Though an unnatural death case was filed after the incident, Quamrul now suspects foul play.

He said, "Anyone from outside may have kept inflammable objects

inside the house. We don't rule out such possibilities since my brother worked at the American embassy.

"My brother (Shahnawaz) was preparing to go to America with his family to settle there permanently... We want a fair investigation into this," he added.

Contacted, Officer-in-Charge Ali Hossain Khan of Uttara West Police Station said if anyone files any specific complaint against someone, the police would look into it.

The Titas Gas Transmission and Distribution Company, which provided the gas connection to the victims' apartment, was carrying out an investigation to ascertain the cause of the fire, the OC told this correspondent.