



A woman and her son on a raft going to dryer areas to cook their food. Behind them is the flooded Dakkhin Gilabari Government Primary School in Chinaduli union of Jamalpur district. The photo was taken recently. PHOTO: ABM AMINUL ISLAM

Education paused

FROM PAGE 1
Education Minister Nurul Islam Nahid said they had begun general repairs of schools damaged by the floods a few months ago.

The number of damaged schools would increase after the recent flooding, he said, adding, "We will soon prepare a complete list of the institutions and take measures to quickly repair them."

The primary and secondary directorates have directed local officials and teachers about taking additional classes to make up for the time lost.

In Lalmonirhat, one of the worst-hit districts, 318 state-run primary schools and five high schools were affected by the flood. Of those, seven primary schools were destroyed while 50 primary and two high schools were damaged.

Nur Islam, headmaster of Gobordhan Ismailpara Government Primary School in Gobordhan village of Aditmari upazila, said his school was destroyed on August 12 and they have not been able to impart lessons to his 207 students since then.

"We are trying to have classes in a rented house and hoping to start classes within a week," he said.

Rezaul Islam, a class-IV student of the school, said, "I did not study at all in the last two weeks since the school got damaged."

His father Hasmat Ali said, "We are concerned about our children's education. We are not sure when classes will resume."

Nabez Uddin Sarker, district primary education officer (DPEO) in Lalmonirhat, said he had sent the damage report to the ministry and was hoping for funds to repair the schools.

In Dinajpur, another badly hit district, classes at 263 primary schools and 167

secondary schools remained suspended since August 20.

Although water was receding in most areas and many started returning home, academic activities could not resume in at least 30 institutes, said Rafiqul Islam, Dinajpur education officer.

The situation in Kurigram is also bad. Some 685 out of 1,233 primary schools were affected. At least 421 schools were damaged and four schools were destroyed, according to district officials.

"We fear going to school as the roads are still under knee-deep water," said Beauty Akter, a class-V student of Char Sharodob Govt Primary School in Halokhona union of Kurigram.

She said there were 25 students in her class and none of them could go to school in the last 10 days.

Beauty said she heard that their second-term exams had been deferred to September 9. "But I did not get the new schedule," she added.

The school's headmaster Ekramul Haque said he could not resume classes even though the district education office asked him after the floodwater receded. The classrooms were still smeared with mud and some people who had lost their homes were staying there, he said.

In Sirajganj, 260 primary schools went under floodwater, disrupting academic activities since the first week of this month.

Md Shafiqul Islam, Sirajganj education officer, said the holding of classes was disrupted in 181 high schools and colleges.

Anik Kumar, a class-V student of Chatianikali Govt Primary School, said they were worried about their upcoming

primary terminal exam as they could not go to school for about a month.

"Primary terminal examination is likely to begin in November, but our studies came to a stop since the flood hit the district. We don't know what will happen," he said.

Uday Kumar Pal, headmaster of Anik's school, said studies of his 588 students were badly affected by the floods.

"The floodwater reached the school premise in the first week of August but things turned worse on August 13 when water entered classrooms," he said hoping to resume classes after Eid.

Sirajganj DPEO Siddique Md Eunus said the picture was almost the same in the 260 primary schools of the district.

In Jamalpur, 254 out of 734 primary schools and 206 out of 372 high schools and colleges could resume academic activities until Wednesday. The rest were closed since August 13.

Students' attendance was poor in schools that had opened.

"We're concerned about imparting all the lessons of the syllabus of class-V as the students could neither study at home nor learn in school," said Shewly Begum, headteacher of Muslema Khatun Govt Primary School in Madarganj upazila.

DPEO Shahidul Islam said he directed teachers to arrange extra classes.

In Nilphamari, classes in 143 govt primary schools were suspended for a week until August 22. Of those, 108 schools were damaged and the condition of 54 was very bad, said DPEO Dilip Kumar Bhoumik.

[Our correspondents in Lalmonirhat, Dinajpur, Kurigram, Pabna, Jamalpur and Nilphamari, contributed to this report]

'Stop fresh exodus of Rohingyas'

FROM PAGE 1
from Rakhine, have assembled close to the border and were making attempts to enter Bangladesh, according to a foreign ministry press release issued yesterday.

Aung Myint Minister Counsellor of Myanmar met Secretary (Asia & Pacific) of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Mahub Uz Zaman yesterday afternoon at the ministry to discuss the evolving situation in the Rakhine State.

Zaman recalled the influx of Myanmar nationals into Bangladesh due to similar military operations in the aftermath of terrorist attacks on October 9 last year that resulted in about 85,000 civilians crossing over to Bangladesh.

Bangladesh has expressed "serious concern" at the possibility of recur-

rence of such a situation as the country already hosts about four lakh Myanmar nationals, said the foreign ministry statement.

The secretary also emphasised on addressing the underlying root of the prolonged problem through a comprehensive and inclusive approach.

Bangladesh has taken note of renewed clashes after attacks on the Myanmar Border Guard police posts in the Rakhine State on Friday, said the statement.

Bangladesh condemned the attacks on Myanmar forces and expressed concern at the loss of innocent lives in those clashes that occurred following recent deployment of forces in Rakhine State.

Bangladesh also stressed on the need for respecting the state responsi-

bility to protect its civilian population and urged Myanmar to ensure appropriate protection and shelter for the unarmed civilians, especially women, children and elderly people.

Following her policy of "zero tolerance" towards violent extremism and terrorism of any form and manifestation, Bangladesh assured Myanmar of continued cooperation in dealing with these challenges, the statement said.

Bangladesh also pointed out that the terrorist attack and clashes occurred at a time when the Rakhine Advisory Commission, popularly known as Kofi Annan Commission, made recommendations towards durable solution for the Rakhine State.

At least 89 people were killed as militants besieged border posts in the Rakhine State on Friday.

The Test begins, finally

FROM PAGE 1
The home of Bangladesh cricket will host its first game after that famous victory against England in the second Test in October last year. The game against Australia will also mark Bangladesh's first five-day game after the victory against Sri Lanka in their landmark 100th Test in Colombo earlier this year.

Steven Smith's Australia acknowledged that it would be a tough challenge when they arrived here on August 18. But they certainly did not expect forceful and at times animated remarks from the home side ahead of the real battle. Bangladesh all-rounder Shakib Al Hasan went on record by saying that 'the Tigers have the ability to win the series 2-0 and the home spin attack is better than the touring side.' Understandably it was done with an intention and apparently succeeded in

irking both Smith and his key bowler off-spinner Nathan Lyon.

Smith at a pre-match briefing yesterday said that he was a bit 'surprised' with a notion of a 2-0 win from a side that have won only 9 out of its 100 Tests. It is a statistic that is as true as Australia's inability to win games in the sub-continent where they could win only two Tests in the last 11 years since their 2-0 sweep against Bangladesh in 2006.

A 2-0 win is definitely a big statement but Bangladesh captain Mushfiqur Rahim added more spice to that debate when he said: "We are not playing against aliens. We are playing against Australia. They are a very good team. But we have the ability to beat them on our home soil. In that case we will have to play really well."

The biggest puzzle ahead of the game was how the newly-laid Mirpur

wicket will play and according to Mushfiqur it would help the spinners. The last Test against England on this ground lasted only three days and the last session was perhaps the biggest inspiration the confident Tigers can take going against the Australia juggernaut.

Although Bangladesh are yet to make the final selection it was learnt that off-spinner Nasir Hossain and pace bowler Shafiqul Islam will mark their return to the team. In that event Taskin Ahmed and top-order batsman Mominul Haque will sit out the game.

Probable Bangladesh team: Mushfiqur Rahim (captain), Tamim Iqbal, Soumya Sarkar, Imrul Kayes, Sabbir Rahman, Shakib Al Hasan, Nasir Hossain, Mehedi Hasan, Taijul Islam, Safiul Islam, Mustafizur Rahman.

Yemen civilians hit by mistake, says Saudi-led coalition

AFP, Riyadh
The Saudi-led Arab military coalition on Saturday admitted responsibility for an air strike the previous day in the Yemeni capital that killed 14 civilians, describing it as a "technical mistake".

The coalition, in a statement carried by the official Saudi Press Agency, said a review of the strike investigators found "that a technical mistake was behind the accident".

Witnesses and medics in Sanaa said several children were among 14 people killed in Friday's air strike that toppled residential blocks in Sanaa, the latest in a wave of deadly raids blamed on the Saudi-led coalition.

Coalition spokesman Colonel Turki al-Malki had told AFP that he would "review the information" about the strike.

Culprits

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Bimol Boiragi of Suagram village, and Sumon Biswas, 18, son of Shishir Biswas of Rogunathpur village -- have been asked to submit Tk 50,000 each.

Hazra denied the incident straightaway. "I have not asked anyone to pay the money," he claimed.

Contacted, Superintendent of Police Md Sydur Rahman Khan expressed his ignorance about the matter. "No one has complained about this incident yet. If anyone files a case, we will take necessary steps," said the district police boss.

The victim's father alleged that Anik Baidya, Diponkor Baidya, Shimul Baidya and Roni Baidya waylaid his daughter when she was returning home after visiting Suagram Temple around 11:00pm on August 15.

They took her to a nearby sawmill and raped her there, he alleged, saying they rescued her from the spot around 2:00am.

Tomal Boiragi's father has, meanwhile, claimed that his son had no involvement in the incident and the victim also did not mention his name in her statement.

He alleged that the vice-chairman called them to go to the upazila parishad office on August 21 and asked him to submit the money. He further alleged that the vice-chairman took his signature on a blank stamped paper and threatened him with severe punishment if they failed to deliver the money.

Talking to The Daily Star, one of the victim's uncles said, "We did not mention the names of Tomal Boiragi and Sumon Biswas. We do not know how their names have been included."

He added, "We went to the upazila parishad office around 1:30pm. There the vice-chairman asked us if we would accept his judgement. We gave our consent."

At one stage, the vice-chairmen declared his "judgement" that the accused would have to "pay" Tk 3.5 lakh and asked the victim's family members to turn up today.

Nur Khan Liton, former director of rights organisation Ain o Salish Kendra, said serious crimes like rape cannot be settled outside court.

"No one including any local government representatives or law enforcer can do this. If anyone does this, his or her action will be considered as an offence," he observed.

I feel ashamed

FROM PAGE 1
Tk 2,900 crore was loaned out to 71 people and the chairman of the bank granted the loans through severe irregularities, he said, referring to BASIC Bank and its then chairman Abdul Hye Bachchu.

ACC representatives were invited to the committee meeting several times, but they avoided the meeting.

"Perhaps they had some limitations," said Razaque, without elaborating.

Interestingly, some former top officials whose time in the Banking Division witnessed some of the biggest SoB scams in country's history also pointed the finger at the institutional inefficiencies in preventing such scams.

Shafiqur Rahman Patwari, a former Banking Division secretary who now heads the Insurance Development and Regulatory Authority (IDRA), said that Bangladesh Bank remained silent for two years after unearthing the Hall-Mark scam.

The central bank took action only after the finance minister made a phone call and asked it to act, he said.

Hall-Mark was among five private groups that hogged press headlines by taking Tk 4,000 crore loan from Sonali Bank without following due procedures. At that time though, the finance minister had famously said: "Tk 4,000 crore is nothing."

At the workshop, another former Banking Division official Gokul Chand Das said there might be a communication gap between the government and the BB when it came to monitoring the state-run banks.

Each of them thinks that the other will take action, said Gokul, now a member of the IDRA.

Citing the Hall-Mark issue, he said the BB unearthed the scam early in 2010 and informed the government about it only in November.

Two years later, in June 2012, the BB at last swung into action and recommended disbanding the Sonali Bank Board when that Board had only eight days to go.

If the central bank had monitored closely from the beginning this would not have happened. Twenty other banks were involved in the Hall-Mark scam, but no action has been taken against them, he noted.

He suggested that the state-run banks be merged to improve their condition.

Krishi Bank and Rajshahi Krishi Unnayan Bank, the two specialised banks, need to be merged into one bank while Rupali, BASIC and Bangladesh Development Bank into one bank. Janata and Agrani banks have to become one bank, he observed.

Also, if the chief executive officers (CEOs or managing directors) fail to achieve their target, their salary has to be slashed every three months. And if

they continue to perform poorly for three quarters in a row, they have to be terminated. This way, the condition of the public banks may be improved, he said.

Bangladesh Bank Governor Fazle Kabir and Deputy Governor SK Sur Chowdhury spoke at the workshop but they did not say anything about the allegations.

SK Sur, however, said merger was no solution to the problems of the state-owned banks.

Bangladesh Institute of Bank Management (BIBM) Director General Toufic Ahmad Choudhury said the state-run banks' governance had to be improved by strengthening the central bank.

No one at the workshop spoke against the Banking Division, but in an independent survey almost everybody will do so, he added.

Improving the condition of the state-run banks requires goodwill and political commitment of the government, he noted.

According to Agrani Bank Chairman Zaid Bakht, appointment of top management people and their extension must be linked with their performance.

The finance ministry makes that decision but the assessment is not done objectively, he noted.

"The top management remains very vulnerable to influence of vested quarters. So when an influential person makes a request, they are in a dilemma as to whether they can refuse it," he said.

"It is easier said than done, but unless this is done they remain prone to corrupt practices and also vulnerable to outside pressure," he added.

In his concluding speech, Muhiht disagreed with Bakht and said the selection of top management was done fairly.

Earlier, Bakht also said state-run banks had to invest in various development projects of the government. For example, four public banks invested Tk 4,000 crore in Hanif flyover for which the banks were now facing problems.

On the other hand, Agrani Bank granted loans to the BPC and the BJMC, both state-owned agencies, which had been paid through bonds and the interest rate on this bond is lower than the bank's cost of fund. As a result, the bank had to count Tk 1,000 crore in losses, he pointed out.

Alauddin A Majid, the incumbent chairman of BASIC Bank, said that in case of big default loans of state-run banks, 80 to 90 percent responsibility lied with the bank board and the top management. So the government must be cautious while appointing them.

At the opening of the daylong workshop, Banking Division Senior Secretary Yunusur Rahman presented a report on the overall condition of the state-owned banks.

Indian forces on high alert

FROM PAGE 16
The toll within the state is at least 30 dead and around 200 injured including about 50 police and security personnel," said Sandhu.

"Some of the injured didn't come to the hospitals fearing that they could face police action or arrests for involvement in the violence," he said.

Official sources told AFP earlier that at least 32 people had died, with most of the fatalities caused by gun shots.

The 50-year-old Singh is known as the "guru in bling" for his penchant for bejewelled costumes and claims to have more than 50 million loyal followers worldwide.

The rape case was brought against him after an anonymous letter was sent to then prime minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee in 2002 accusing him of repeatedly raping the sender and several other women in the sect.

A judge asked the Central Bureau of Investigations to look into the accusations, but it took years to trace the alleged victims and it was not until 2007 that two women came forward and filed charges.

Some 200,000 members of Singh's sect had gathered in Panchkula in a show of support a day before the verdict, which enraged his followers, with many

saying they were in a state of shock.

"I have been with dear Ram Rahim Singh for around 14 years. I can bet that all the allegations against our guru are false," said Rajkumar, a shopkeeper from Haryana who was undergoing treatment at the hospital.

"He can't do any wrong... He works to rid the world of all its troubles," he told AFP, his head heavily bandaged.

Singh's Dera Sacha Sauda sect, whose headquarters are located in nearby Sirsa town, said it would appeal the verdict.

"This is unjust. We will appeal against the judgement," it said in a statement.

The sprawling Sirsa premises, spread across nearly 1,000 acres (404 hectares), include schools, sports facilities, a hospital and a cinema hall -- thanks to Singh's love for the silver screen.

In 2015 Singh started a film franchise portraying him as MSG or the 'Messenger of God', performing miracles, preaching to thousands and beating up gangsters while singing and dancing.

His last flick 'MSG - The Warrior Lion Heart' was released last year, with the guru playing a secret agent fighting aliens and UFOs.

Singh's sentencing will be announced tomorrow.

Erdogan compares coup defeat to mediaeval battle

AFP, Ankara
Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan yesterday compared the defeat of last year's attempted coup against his rule to key events in the country's history, including a 1071 triumph by Turkic tribes over the Byzantines in Anatolia.

Erdogan has in recent years sought to put greater emphasis not just on the history of the Ottoman dynasty -- who conquered Constantinople in 1453 -- but of Turkic tribes in pre-Ottoman history.

Coinciding with a major protest event by the main opposition party at the western of the country, Erdogan on Saturday led a large-scale celebration to commemorate the 946th anniversary of the 1071 Battle of Malazgirt.

It was here that pre-Ottoman tribes led

by Sultan Alp Arslan defeated the Byzantines and captured their Emperor Romanos IV Diogenes in a victory seen as opening up Anatolia to Turkic peoples.

"Whoever Sultan Alp Arslan fought against, whoever (Seljuk) Sultan Kilic Arslan fought against, whoever Gazi Mustafa Kemal fought against, we fought them on July 15," the president said in the speech at the scene of the battle in the eastern Mus province.

Mustafa Kemal Atatürk was a key Ottoman commander in the Battle of Gallipoli in 1915, where Ottoman forces resisted an invasion by Allied powers, and went on to found the modern Republic in 1923.

"The game is the same, the aim the same. Only the script, the extras are different," Erdogan said.