

# Fresh areas flooded in 15 dists



PHOTO: STAR

Houses in Belkuchi upazila in Sirajganj are reeling under the threat of being washed away by raging floodwaters. The floods twinned with the Jamuna river erosion left 20,000 people homeless in two unions of the district and carried away some 500 houses.

## STAFF CORRESPONDENT

With the Brahmatputra, Ganges and Teesta still in spate, flood situation in 15 districts deteriorated yesterday, submerging houses and crop lands in fresh areas.

The districts are Panchagarh, Nilphamari, Lalmonirhat, Rangpur, Kurigram, Gaibandha, Bogra, Jamalpur, Sirajganj, Pabna, Tangail, Manikganj, Munshiganj, Rajbari and Madaripur.

Two persons drowned and one was missing in Lalmonirhat as a boat capsized in the swelling Teesta and two children died of water-borne diseases.

Swirling waters form the Teesta have inundated rail tracts at some places in Lalmonirhat and made Teesta railway bridge vulnerable with Water Development Board officials sounding a red alert.

The Flood Forecasting and Warning Centre said yesterday the Brahmaputra-Jamuna and the Teesta registered further rise at all points and crossed danger level at many points.

The Ganges-Padma also recorded rise at all points and most of the rivers in these two basins also rose. Rivers in the Meghna and the South Eastern Hill basins registered both rise and fall.

Out of 85 monitoring stations on the rivers, 43 points recorded rise and 23 recorded fall. Water level crossed red mark at 18 points.

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## Jamunadevours 2unions,more underthreat

### ROVING CORRESPONDENT, Sirajganj

Jamuna erosion has left a trail of devastation in Rajapur and Soyadabad unions in Belkuchi upazila of Sirajganj while some other unions south of the affected ones are under threat.

Some 500 houses were washed away rendering 20,000 people homeless in the unions and two educational institutions and 25 kilometres of road have been damaged by flood.

The erosion, that began reportedly due to the formation of a canal during the Jamuna bridge construction, caused almost 80 per cent of Randhuni Bari village in Rajapur union to go under water during the past seven days, said the villagers.

Victims, shifted on to a newly emerged shoal on the western side of Jamuna naming it 'Char Randhuni Bari Village'.

"We were told the canal would be closed after completion of the bridge construction. But it was not done, pushing us to the disaster," said Bashir Mollah, a villager.

"A power station will soon be constructed in the area causing the canal to be automatically closed," said Deputy Commissioner of Sirajganj Ibadat Ali to The Daily Star on Wednesday.

Abdul Quader, a villager, said he had a house and a handloom factory with nine machines and 13 employees on the northern side of Randhuni Bari-Belkuchi road. But three days ago his land went under

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# Unresolved issues to top JEC agenda

## NAZMUL AHSAN

The pending issues like transshipment, free trade agreement (FTA) and trade barriers will figure out prominently during the upcoming India-Bangladesh Joint Economic Commission (JEC) meeting.

Trade imbalance, gas export from Bangladesh and development of road and rail communications between the two next door neighbours will also be discussed at the meeting, sources said.

The two-day talks will begin in Dhaka next Tuesday after a six-year lull.

Indian Foreign Minister Yashwant Sinha will lead the Indian delegation while his Bangladesh counterpart M Morshad Khan the home side during the meet to be held at the National Economic Council (NEC) auditorium.

India has long been pressing Bangladesh for signing agreements on transshipment, transit and FTA, besides showing interest in importing gas from Bangladesh.

Bangladesh, since 1997 when the last meeting of the JEC was held, has been assuring India of discussing those issues, particularly relating to transit, transshipment and border trade, at the next JEC meeting.

During the last two bilateral trade talks between Dhaka and New Delhi held in 2002 and this year, Bangladesh had avoided the issues by referring those to the JEC meeting as a genuine forum for such discussions, sources said.

However, Bangladesh might discuss transshipment, border trade and transit in the upcoming meeting, a foreign ministry official told The Daily Star, preferring anonymity.

Sources said the government has not so far decided on the above mentioned issues due to differences of opinion in the ruling alliance. Alliance partner Jamaat-e-Islami is against giving transshipment and transit facilities to India, they said.

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## Oriental Bank asked to cut down costs

### STAFF CORRESPONDENT

As the financial performance of Oriental Bank, formerly Al-Baraka Bank, remains below the mark, the Bangladesh Bank (BB) has imposed 11 measures on it to cut down costs.

The measures include restrictions in sanctioning new loans, freezing capital expenditures and setting various targets for the bank to achieve within the year.

The restrictions were imposed in June through a supplementary memorandum of understanding (SMoU).

According to the SMoU, the bank can make only non-funded investment

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## AL not rejoining budget session, seeks int'l probe on Bogra hauls

### STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The main opposition Awami League (AL) yesterday ruled out its rejoining the current budget session of the Jatiya Sangsad.

"... Our joining the coming sessions will depend on government's readiness to run the House following the Rules of Procedure," said Abdul Jalil, general secretary of the AL.

Briefing newsmen during the lunch break of the AL Central Working Committee (ALCWC) meeting at the Dhanmondi office of the party, Jalil said the atmosphere in the House has deteriorated due to continued 'abusive' speeches by treasury bench members.

He demanded expunction of all abusive speeches by the treasury benchers against the AL and its chief Sheikh Hasina. SEE PAGE 11 COL 4

## Letter to speaker

### UNB, Dhaka

The Opposition Chief Whip M Abdus Shahid yesterday sent a letter to the speaker urging him to expunge "indecent and unpatriotic remarks" by the ruling alliance MPs on July 8 against Leader of the Opposition Sheikh Hasina regarding pulling down of the prime minister's portrait.

In the letter, he said that the "false and derogatory" remarks by Moshir Rahman, Harunur Rashid and Dr Syed Abdullah M Taher had not only tarnished the image of the House, but also undermined the opposition whip as a member of parliament.

Shahid said the deputy speaker, from his organisational point of view, ordered the establishment ministry to probe the matter and the image of his high office has been tarnished due to his decision on a "false" issue.

"We ask them (alliance MPs) to prove that Sheikh Hasina had pulled down the portrait of Prime Minister Khaleda Zia in Chapinawabganj," he said.

"How did it become sure that the incident took place in front of Sheikh Hasina?" Shahid questioned while addressing a press briefing.

	Sun Rises	Sun Sets
July 11		6-50 pm
July 12	5-18 am	
Prayer Timings		
July 11		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fair	4-15	4-45
Juma	12-15	1-20
Asr	5-00	5-15
Maghrib	6-55	7-00
Esha	8-15	8-45
Source: Islamic Foundation		

# India to join SAARC summit in Islamabad

## AP, Kathmandu

India and Pakistan have agreed yesterday that their leaders would attend SAARC summit in January aimed at tackling the region's poverty and free trade problems.

The South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation, which can't hold a summit unless all seven member countries are present, will hold its next top-level gathering in Islamabad, Indian Foreign Secretary Kanwal Sibal said.

A SAARC committee "has reached a consensus to hold the summit from Jan. 4-6," Sibal said after a meeting of the group's

senior foreign ministry officials in Kathmandu, Nepal.

The summit will be preceded by meetings of others bodies from December 29 this year.

Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee and Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf have not spoken since the last SAARC summit in Kathmandu in January 2002. India refused to attend a summit scheduled for this past January in Pakistan.

The decision on the next summit was reached even though Sibal and his Pakistani counterpart didn't shake hands at Wednesday's meeting. The foreign secretaries of

Nepal, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Bhutan and the Maldives also attended the meeting.

Vajpayee recently spoke with Pakistan's Prime Minister Zafarullah Khan Jamali on phone, and the two countries have made tentative steps toward normalising their relations in recent times.

But the road to the January summit isn't likely to be smooth. Even as Sibal announced the agreement yesterday, he criticised Pakistan as being "the slowest in moving

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## As he refused to pay toll

### STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Miscreants pushed a small trader from the fourth floor of Rajuk Babhan down yesterday noon as he refused to pay toll.

The 35-year-old victim, Nasir Uddin, who runs a tea stall in front of Rajuk Babhan, is now undergoing treatment at a clinic in the city.

The victim's nephew Shahin said some extortionists beat up Nasir on Monday as he refused to pay the extortionists Tk 1 lakh.

The miscreants came again at 2:20pm on that day and demanded the money. "As uncle did not pay them the money, they beat him up and took him to the fourth floor and after that they hurled him down from there," Shahin said.

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## Criminal Kochi's man dies in accidental fire

### STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A member of top criminal Moshir Rahman Kochi's gang died yesterday at Kafrul when a bullet from a pistol that the gang was checking accidentally hit him.

The 22-year-old victim was identified as Abdul Baker whom Kochi had brought from his village home in Burichang, Comilla a few years back. Baker was trained up to become Kochi's associate and live at his residence at Ibrahimpur.

Baker and four others Mizan, Arif, Mintu and Abul Kalam were checking the pistol in front of Baker's workshop near Shimulbagh Eidgahmash in Ibrahimpur at 8:30am.

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## Two convicts executed at Comilla Jail

### UNB, Comilla

Two convicts in a murder case were executed in the Comilla Central Jail early yesterday.

The convicts, identified as Haji Giasuddin, 58, and Jamaluddin, 48, were from Char King Boaliar village of Hatiya upazila in Noakhali district.

The District and Sessions Judge's Court awarded them death penalty for killing UP member Abul Kashem in 1990.

Their appeal to the High Court and Supreme Court were rejected and they also failed to get pardon from the President.

Deputy commissioner, ADC (Revenue), two first class magistrates and civil surgeon of Comilla were present during the execution.



## Victim's uncle gives fresh deposition

### COURT CORRESPONDENT

Atiqur Rahman Masum, the 7th prosecution witness in the Shazneen case and paternal uncle of the victim, again gave his deposition before the Second Special Tribunal for Prevention of Women and Children Repression, Dhaka, yesterday.

Earlier, he had given his deposition on March 12 this year and was cross-examined. But the prosecution lawyers on July 8 submitted a petition seeking recall of Masum to exhibit some documents of his

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PHOTO: STAR

Police detain Mollah, a religious leader, from Purana Paltan in Dhaka yesterday. He was in woman's burqa during arrest.

# Over 100 jt secys set to supersede seniors

## STAFF CORRESPONDENT

In an attempt to fill the vacuum in top administrative positions that is putting brakes on activities, the government has decided to promote over 100 joint secretaries to the posts of additional secretary.

High level sources said the Superior Selection Board (SSB) headed by the cabinet secretary will sit on Sunday to finalise the promotions of 104 joint secretaries of the 1977 and 1979 batches to the positions of additional secretary.

They alleged the move to upgrade officials of the two batches is aimed purely to supersede the much-talked about 1973 batch and elevate officials of the 1977 and 1979 batches to the positions of full-fledged secretary before the next general election.

Officials said if the two batches are promoted, a total of 153 officials of the 1973 batch, holding posts of joint secretary, will be superseded.

According to an estimate by the ministry of establishment, there are 41 vacancies for additional secretary post, but the government has decided to promote 104 officials.

Despite recent promotions to the post of deputy secretary, there is a serious backlog in low and mid tiers of the civil administration as hundreds of eligible officials have remained stuck in the same position for years.

Sources said the government

had assured the deputy secretaries of 1981 batch, who became eligible for promotion as joint secretary over three years ago, of their promotion along with the 1977 and 1979 batches.

But now the government has decided only to give promotion to the posts of additional secretaries and not consider the 1981 batch, officials said.

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## Another 600 bullets found in Bogra

### UNB, Bogra

Another 600 bullets were recovered from Jogarpara village in Kahalu upazila yesterday.

Police recovered the bullets wrapped in a packet from near the brick field of one Yasin Ali.

With this haul, total number of bullets recovered during the last 14 days rose to 99,957.

Meanwhile, Mozam and Altaf who had first informed the police about unloading of ammunition and explosives from a pineapple loaded truck on the night of June 27 alleged that UP member Abdul Hamid threatened him with death.