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PM tells House \$889m foreign aid sought, massive plan for post-flood rehabilitation

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday told the Jatiya Sangsad that the government has appealed for an estimated 777 million US dollars of foreign assistance for post-flood rehabilitation in the country, reports BSS.

Besides, another 112 million dollars of foreign assistance was sought for emergency relief operation, she added while replying to a question from Gazi Mohammad Shajahan of Chittagong-11.

The Prime Minister said

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Khaleda offers cooperation, suggests steps to face flood

Leader of the Opposition in Parliament, Begum Khaleda Zia last night offered unconditional cooperation to the government for overcoming the difficulties posed by the devastating flood across the country, reports UNB.

"We are ready to cooperate with the government because people and country are more important to us than party and politics," the BNP chairperson said amidst cheers from her deputies.

She cautioned that the country may face a critical situation due to the prolonged flood and asked the government to declare the worst-hit districts 'disaster zone' and set up relief kitchens to feed the hungry people.

The Opposition leader suggested immediate formation of an all-party relief committee to ensure that each of the needy gets help. The committee will ensure transparency and accountability.

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MPs had assured us help, three deportees give statements

By Staff Correspondent

Three of the 12 persons including two Jatiya Sangsad members who were deported from Heathrow airport in London last week, in their judicial statements before court yesterday said that the MPs had assured them help in going to the UK.

The three, Iftikhar Hossain, Abdul Malek and Sahin, made judicial statements in the court of the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate.

The two BNP MPs who were released on personal bond and the 10 others were arrested and

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UNGA session begins today

The 53rd session of UN General Assembly begins today at the United Nations Headquarters in New York, reports UNB.

This year's assembly has a provisional list of 165 items on its agenda, said a UNIC press release in the city yesterday.

It brings together the delegation of all 185 member states for an examination of international issues.

Dr Didier Opertti Badan, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Uruguay, has been elected as the President of the 53rd session of the General Assembly.

JS session prorogued

The Jatiya Sangsad which went into session on Monday, was prorogued at 11:50 last night with a special prayer seeking divine blessings to mitigate the sufferings of flood affected people and help overcome the difficulties, reports UNB.

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Machines silent, thousands jobless in flood-hit industrial belt

By Inam Ahmed

It is an uncanny scene. A huge building supposed to be full of whirring sound of sewing machines lies silent. Waist deep water from the Buriganga sloshes inside the small shops where tailoring houses once churned out the bulk of the country's domestic cheap garments. Shop owners sleep inside, some just keep gazing out, purposelessly.

This is what the flood has done to the small industrial units and businesses across the Buriganga. Miles of industrial belt along the river bank, which developed because of low estab-

lishment cost and abundance of cheap labour, is facing ruination because of the two-month long flood.

As business came to a halt, thousands of employees have been shed off. The entrepreneurs do not know how to overcome the disaster. None of the establishments had been set up on bank loans. Unlike big industrialist, they cannot pass the loss onto the banks and clamour for concessions and fresh funds.

At the Zia Parishad Market of Keraniganj, Md Berek sat frustrated inside his small ap-

parel shop. Stacks of garments lay unsold on the racks of Faruk Garments.

"For the last 15 days, I could not sell even a taka worth of clothes," says Berek. "In fact, my business has almost come to a halt for the last one month. Today, I also do not see any prospect of sale."

Berek engaged three employees in the shop. He had shed them off two weeks ago as business went down with water.

The shop supported Berek and his two brothers, all of whom have families. Today, he has to live on borrowing.

"I have mortgaged my wife's ornaments and borrowed money," Berek disclosed after some hesitation.

At Nuru Market of Keraniganj, Md Kamal Dhall and his two employees sit idly. One of the employees leisurely sews a shirt, mostly to pass the time. Of the two sewing machines, one is covered.

"There has been no work to keep the machines rolling for the last two months," says Dhall. He has slashed the wage of his employees to about one third, from Tk 3000 a month to

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On the other side of the Buriganga, nothing is above the water level. The picture, taken yesterday, shows a dockyard at Kaliganj submerged by flood water. — Star photo

Ship carrying WFP wheat diverted to Bangladesh

World Food Programme (WFP) has diverted a ship carrying 15,000 metric tons of wheat to Bangladesh as part of its emergency food assistance in the backdrop of unprecedented flood in the country, reports BSS.

The ship 'M/V Golden Sun' was originally carrying the wheat to another country, a press release of WFP said.

The ship now off the coast of Africa is expected to arrive at Chittagong Port by September 16.

An official announcement yesterday said WFP has committed to providing Bangladesh 2.28 lakh tons of foodgrains in response to government's appeal.

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Residents start leaving DND dam area

Special alert for Dhaka city, Narayanganj

By Staff Correspondent

The flood situation may take an alarming turn in the central districts including Dhaka in the next three to four days, the Flood Forecasting and Warning Centre said last night.

The centre sent a special alert signal to the top authorities, saying the situation in and around Dhaka city 'needs special attention from all corners' as it is apprehended to assume a serious proportion.

Relief Ministry's control room said the grim situation in 32 districts took a disastrous shape and water remained static only in Narail district.

In Narayanganj, the district administration yesterday

started looking for ways to evacuate people in case the Dhaka-Narayanganj-Demra (DND) embankment collapses, according to officials.

Breaches have developed at 36 points of the dam and the water level is rising further threatening the embankment.

In the event of an evacuation, the district administration has asked the army, police and the Red Crescent volunteers to participate in the effort.

Deputy Commissioner of Narayanganj, Abdur Rahman told the BBC yesterday evening that his administration would start evacuating people as soon as he gets signal from the Water

Development Board officials concerned.

Meanwhile, some residents of Postagola within the embankment started leaving their homes on their own late last night, a WDB engineer said.

At Chashara, the most vulnerable point, the height of the protection wall built by over 20,000 sand bags has been raised by another six inches as the water level of the Shitalakya rose by another 8 cm yesterday.

MA Monaem, ADC (General) of Narayanganj, told The Daily Star last night that all efforts were being taken to save the embankment. Some six lakh

people live in the area protected by the embankment.

He said that a magistrate, Mahfuzul Haq, was stationed at Chashara railway station for keeping constant vigilance while patrol teams led by two other magistrates were keeping vigilance on the Chashara-Pagla portion of the dam last night.

A PID handout said last night, Roads and Highways Department officials and employees were working round the clock to save the 34-kilometre DND embankment, which became most vulnerable at Ali-ganj, Panchabati and Chashara

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Capital's road links with all dists snapped

By Naimul Haq

Road links between the capital and rest of the country totally snapped yesterday, said the Chief Engineer of Roads and Highways Department.

"All the major highways connecting the capital with rest of the country have gone under flood waters at different places," he told The Daily Star last night.

Movement of vehicles were suspended yesterday through the Joydevpur-Kaliakoir, Asulia-Savar, Savar-Mirpur, Manikganj-Aricha and the Dhaka-Mymensingh highways.

The road between Tangail and Jamuna Bridge and the ap-

proach roads on both the sides of the bridge were inundated at places yesterday and movement of transports have been suspended, he said.

Following continued suspension of the road link between Dhaka and Chittagong, the shipping ministry yesterday decided to introduce ferry service from Daudkandi (Comilla) to Kancharpur (Dhaka) today on an emergency basis, an official of the ministry said.

As the Padma and Jamuna swelled further, the Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Corporation (BIWTC) suspended ferry

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28.72 lakh MT food deficit likely, JS told

Based on a preliminary assessment of losses of aus and aman crops in the current floods, the estimated food deficit is likely to stand at 28.72 lakh metric tons, Food and Agriculture Minister Matia Chowdhury told the Jatiya Sangsad yesterday, reports BSS.

Replying to a question from Abdul Latif Mirza (AL-Sirajganj), the food and agriculture minister said at the beginning of the 1998-99 fiscal the quantity of food deficit was estimated at 21.27 lakh metric tons.

Interim RC Formal letter handed over to Shantu Larma

From CHT Correspondent

KHAGRACHHARI, Sept 8: A formal letter on formation of the CHT interim Regional Council (RC) was handed over to Parbatya Chaitagram Jana Sanghati Samity chief Jotindria Bodhipriya Larma alias Shantu Larma today.

Khagrachhari Deputy Commissioner AKM Jafrul Hossain handed over the letter. The interim RC was formed on Sunday.

Shantu Larma later told this correspondent that they would

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Milk Vita plant in Pabna faces closure

From Ranesh Maitra

PABNA, Sept 8: Milk Vita, the lone milk processing plant in North Bengal, is facing closure as most of the dairy farms supplying milk to the plant have been severely affected by the ongoing floods, official sources said.

The plant at Baghabari depends on nearly 10,000 government and private dairy farms, scattered over Shahzadpur, Faridpur and Ullapara thanas under greater Pabna district, for supply of required quantity of milk.

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GET UP, STAND UP... DON'T GIVE UP THE FIGHT: Water is already three feet above the road. But still local people try to resist the overflowing Buriganga near the Postogola crematory in the city with sandbags. — Star photo

Ferry service between Kanchpur, Daudkandi soon

A temporary ferry service between Kanchpur and Daudkandi is being introduced on emergency basis to resume traffic movement on the Dhaka-Chittagong highway, reports UNB.

The service to be introduced aims at ferrying thousands of goods-laden trucks, stranded at Kanchpur and Daudkandi.

It also aims at transportation of emergency medicine, relief materials and exportable goods, specially ready-made garments, to Chittagong port.

BIWTA and BIWTC will arrange necessary ferry and pontoon on emergency basis for the service under the supervision of the Shipping Ministry, an official handout said yesterday.

Necessary road infrastructure will be constructed by the Roads and Highways department.

Meanwhile, four K-type ferries and two pontoons left Dhaka for Daudkandi. Twelve trucks will be ferried in each trip, the handout added.

An unnecessary battle, lost and won by both

By Nazmul Ashraf

It was a battle lost, and then won, by both the benches in parliament yesterday.

The battle that ate up 50 minutes of a scheduled debate on the century's worst flood now facing the country was over who would speak when and after whom. The sequence was important when it came to rebutting a formidable opponent's remarks.

It was a big battle, and costly one as well if one considers the precious time it wasted, between the heavyweights.

Speaker Humayun Rashid Choudhury found himself in a helpless position, failing to find out a negotiated settlement to the crisis, even after adjourning the House for the purpose.

The House was thrown into a near pandemonium, which led to a 23-minute suspension of proceedings as two top leaders of the treasury and the opposition benches desired to speak after each other.

The crisis started brewing up as soon as the Speaker announced that he had received a note from the Opposition chief whip that Deputy Leader Badruddoza Choudhury would prefer speaking after Tofail Ahmed.

Soon after, the Speaker disclosed a similar note for Tofail had come to him. "I've two requests in hand. I'm now in a fix," the Chair said, triggering noises from both sides.

At this stage, the Speaker was seen shuffling with the two pieces of paper, while Water Resources Minister Abdur Razzak had just started speaking.

Razzak finished, and the Chair announced it was B Choudhury's turn now. The Opposition Chief Whip, Khadkar Delwar Hossain, rose to his feet amidst shouts from his comrades.

He pointed out that the treasury bench note came after his

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Donors urged to rush food aid

By Staff Correspondent

Finance Minister SAMS Kibria yesterday briefed the donors about the government's relief distribution system and urged them to expedite dispatch of food aid.

The donors were told at a meeting at the National Economic Council (NEC) conference room that the government has started distributing food to flood victims under different programmes, but it needs assurances from donors that sufficient food aid is on the way to replenish the stocks, according to meeting sources. When there is such assurance, "the government can then strengthen its relief activities," the donors were

told.

Meanwhile, in response to the UN flash appeal for 223 million US dollars relief assistance last Friday, donors have so far committed 104 million dollars including US food aid of four lakh tonnes of wheat which was committed before the appeal.

The UN is expected to make a second appeal for relief soon, said David Lockwood, resident representative of UNDP, at a press briefing called by the finance minister after the meeting with donors.

What would be the amount of the appeal and when it would be launched will depend on how fast the water recedes and the

need for rehabilitation can be assessed, sources said.

Kibria also urged the donors to advance their high priority food shipment. However, even that would take at least one and a half month to arrive.

Earlier, briefing newsmen, Kibria claimed the present relief distribution system is the "best arrangement done and party neutral."

"It is the result of experience from previous disaster management and whatever negative statement has come in the press about distribution of relief is misleading," said the finance minister. "All mainstream relief

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Arrest of Rubel Mukuli Begum may have influenced DB men

By Staff Correspondent

The CID suspects that local Awami League leader Mukuli Begum may have influenced the DB police to arrest Rubel, according to sources close to the investigators.

Shamim Reza Rubel, who was arrested by the DB police from in front of his house on July 23, was tortured to death in their custody the same day.

After getting the final opinion of the handwriting experts yesterday, the CID is now sus-

pecting that Mukuli Begum may have been involved in getting Rubel arrested.

The CID had collected samples of handwritings from nine people including Mukuli Begum for detecting the persons who had written the recovered 'chit' that described the location of Rubel's residence on one side and the address of a nearby coaching centre on the other side.

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Mushtaque was the conspirator, not Farooq: Defence Counsel

It was clear from prosecution witnesses that killing of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman on August 15, 1975, was not pre-planned, argued the defence counsel in the District and Sessions Judge's Court yesterday, reports UNB.

Khan Saifur Rahman, the counsel for Col Syed Farooq Rahman also quoted the prosecution witnesses to substantiate his argument.

He submitted that those who came out of the cantonment on the fateful night did not kill Bangabandhu. "Neither they nor the army-police guards at the residence committed the murder. A third force was be-

hind the killing."

The oath of allegiance was written at the radio station, the Indemnity Ordinance was promulgated on August 20 and all other related activities amply manifest that there was no preparation for the incident.

Quoting witnesses the lawyer said the army personnel who came out of the cantonment returned all ammunition on return to the cantonment.

He said if the murder was intended only at bringing about a change in the government, then there was no justification of killing other members of the family of Bangabandhu.

If the August 15 incident

would have been a follow up of a conspiracy, argued the counsel, then the accused would have taken all legal preparations. "So, the August 15 incident was a sudden incident, it was not an incident expected."

The counsel argued that the broadcast of announcements on August 15 morning over radio were legalised by the Indemnity Ordinance and had been incorporated in the Constitution. So, the accused could not be made guilty based on those announcements.

Moreover, the Indemnity Ordinance promulgated on August 20, was a document signed

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Asma seriously ill, both legs swollen

By Staff Correspondent

Asma Begum, whose only functioning kidney was 'mistakenly' removed by doctors at the Dhaka Medical College Hospital about a month ago, is now seriously ill at the Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University (BMU) with both her legs swollen.

She was shifted to the BMU from DMCH on Monday.

While visiting her at the dialysis unit of the hospital yesterday, Asma told this correspondent that she had acute pain in her legs in the morning. "I have recurring pain this

morning. Doctors injected drug to relieve me of pain about an hour ago," Asma said.

"She may have developed other complications but doctors do not communicate with me," Asma's mother said.

Asked about Asma's condition, attending doctors refused to say anything. "Our lips are fastened, we cannot make comments," one doctor said.

When contacted, Prof Harun-ur-Rashid, Head of Nephrology Department, at the hospital who is supervising her

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Export Promotion Bureau invites application from bonafide exporters for selection of CIP (Export) for the year 1999 based on export performance during 1997-98.

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- Applications in prescribed proforma, should reach the undersigned on or before 20-09-98.

DFP-19020-3/9 Major (Rtd) A K M Nizamul Alam
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