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Govt has made all arrangements to meet food shortfall : PM

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday said that her government has made adequate arrangement of food, and vowed that none would be allowed to die from starvation, reports UNB.

Dispelling 'fears of famine' after the recession of flood waters, Hasina confidently said 'nobody will die from hunger.' Exchanging views with the editors of national newspapers and news agencies at her office in the afternoon, Hasina said: "Yes, we have food deficit due to the devastating and prolonged flood in the country, but we have made all arrangements to meet the shortfall."

The Prime Minister said more than 40 lakh metric tons of foodgrains would be made available through import and external aid.

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Cabinet talks post-flood measures

By Nurul Kabir

Post-flood rehabilitation programmes, especially the strategy to fight food shortages, dominated the Cabinet meeting proceedings yesterday, sources said.

"We mainly discussed how to meet the food shortage and the types of post-flood rehabilitation programmes," a minister said.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina assured her Cabinet colleagues of "all possible steps" to face the food crisis, including airlifting of foodgrains on an

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Special security steps for foodgrains movement

By Reaz Ahmad

The ministry of food has sought special security measures from the home ministry for safe movement of food consignments on the highways. It has also asked the shipping ministry to ensure smooth functioning of ferry services between Kanchari and Daudkandi to bypass the flood-damaged part of the Dhaka-Chittagong Highway.

The ministry's fear of a possible worsening of the law and order situation stemmed from the latest estimates of food shortages, which could be as high as 42 lakh metric tonnes.

Militarymen take over at ports Thursday

The home ministry responded quickly to the food ministry appeal, made two weeks ago, assuring adequate steps. The shipping ministry also moved fast to launch the ferry services and increased the number of berthing places for food consignments.

In line with the government's frantic efforts to make the best use of available infrastructure, the military jawans will take positions at the Chittagong Port, plagued by labour unrest. At Mongla, members of

Bangladesh Navy will help port authorities ease the congestion caused by floods.

They have been ordered to take special care of food consignments, officials said.

The deployment of armed forces will take effect from Thursday next (September 17), according to a decision by an inter-ministerial meeting yesterday.

The meeting discussed the so-called "Operation Coordination Programme" (OCP), devised jointly by the senior officials of

the food ministry, shipping ministry and the Armed Forces Division yesterday evening.

As prolonged flood ate up agricultural production substantially, the decision is to procure some 25 lakh tonnes in both private and government imports. The government also expects some 15 lakh tonnes in emergency food aid.

According to the OCP, sources said, three inter-ministerial coordination committees would work in Dhaka, at Chittagong and Mongla ports to

monitor the "clear-congestion" efforts.

Officials say 60 per cent of food-carrying ships are anchored at Chittagong Port while the rest at Mongla.

The government steps come in the wake of agitation by port workers at Chittagong, who oppose the proposed private container terminal at Patenga. Officials hope that the situation will improve when the men in uniform take over.

Meanwhile, a wider road was built yesterday to approach the newly-installed 48-kilometre Kanchari-Daudkandi ferry route after an initial setback at

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BB's preliminary estimate 3000 units financed by NCBs, FIs affected

By Inam Ahmed

The Bangladesh Bank (BB) has made a preliminary estimate that about 3000 industrial units, financed by seven NCBs and development financial institutions, have been affected by the flood so far.

The total loss of these units amount to Tk 611 crore, said the estimate, very preliminary in nature.

The BB made the estimate through the regional offices and branches of the NCBs and de-

velopment financial institutions.

"It is the first estimate that puts the number of affected industrial units at 2964," said a source. "We will monitor the impact further and by the end of this month, we will get a concrete picture."

After the estimate is finalised, the BB will calculate how much money will be needed to put those on foot again. A

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Flood situation improves further

The overall flood situation of the country improved further with the major rivers falling steadily, report agencies.

Out of the 50 districts, more or less affected by the worst ever deluge, the situation in 13 districts returned to normalcy with flood water starting to recede.

Dhaka is among the 37 other districts which showed steady improvement as the major rivers continued to fall.

Meanwhile, downpour in some parts of the country yesterday added to the miseries of the people who lost their homesteads and are living under open sky.

A 14 mm rainfall in Dhaka caused fresh water logging in some parts of the city.

With improvement in the flood situation and raising of the submerged rail tracks by the railway engineers and employees in six vulnerable points between Tongi and Jinardi, direct railway service between Dhaka and Chittagong, Sylhet and Noakhali was restored yesterday, railway officials said.

According to Roads and Highways Department officials, heavy vehicles started moving with caution on the Dhaka-

Aricha highway yesterday while all sorts of communications on the Dhaka-Chittagong, Dhaka-Mawa, and Dhaka-Sylhet highways still remained suspended. Due to inundation of the Dhaka-Tangail highway the North Bengal-bound vehicles are still moving through the Bangabandhu Bridge via Myensingh, they added.

The Buriganga at Dhaka fell further by 13 cm, but was still flowing 97 cm above the danger mark.

The Shitalakhya was flowing 117 cm above the danger mark.

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PM's office to remain open on Saturdays

In view of the deteriorating flood situation, the Prime Minister's office will remain open on Saturdays until further order for carrying out necessary administrative works and co-ordinating relief activities, reports UNB.

The announcement of the Prime Minister's office yesterday said the order will come into immediate effect.

WFP appeals for 3.5 lakh MT more foodgrains

By Special Correspondent

The World Food Programme (WFP) has sought an additional 355,000 tonnes of foodgrains for Bangladesh to tide over the massive crop damage by floods.

Added with WFP's current stocks and pledges from donors, it would help maintain food security in the critical days ahead, its representative said.

"If needed we would seek more grains to help the most vulnerable, at least 15 million

people," Werner Klene told reporters yesterday, expressing optimism on donors' response.

He said the WFP has a stock of 550,000 tonnes of foodgrains in Bangladesh for the Food For Works (FFW) and Vulnerable Group Feeding (VGF) programmes. The United States has pledged 400,000 tonnes and another 110,000 tonnes is expected from the European

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IN SEARCH OF LIFE: Safe drinking water is the most scarce stuff in the old part of the city. Tubewells are banned there, but still some defiant people have installed them. The photo shows, on Bahadurpur Lane, neighbours who benefit from the "illegal" tubewells march in a boat procession on to the wells, yet to sink and probably still safe. — Star photo by A K M Mohsin

Cry for fresh micro-credit funds NGOs plan moratorium for poor borrowers

By Govinda Shil

A good number of NGOs which have micro-credit programmes are considering moratoria on repayment by borrowers affected by the unprecedented flooding.

Some of them are also planning to create new funds for their stakeholders, aiming to support income-generating activities immediately after recession of flood water. These NGOs think that fresh injection of funds should help the poor borrowers repay the defaulted loans.

"We already have a set of rules defining scopes for such a moratorium on loan repayment

in an area affected by natural calamity," said Prof. Muhammad Yunus of Grameen Bank.

Each of the more than 1100 Grameen branches has the authority to make independent decisions about concessions where necessary, said Yunus, speaking to The Daily Star.

About 60 per cent of GB branch areas have been affected more or less by the prolonged

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Khulna power plant yet to be completed

By Staff Correspondent

The 108 MW Khulna barge-mounted power plant, inaugurated by the Prime Minister on Saturday, is yet to supply power to the national grid as the plant is still incomplete.

Sources concerned said that the plant was inaugurated by the Prime Minister during its test run. At present, the plant is only partially operational.

"On Saturday, this plant generated at best two MW and on Sunday only four MW of power," said one source.

The private builders of the plant, Wartsila NSD and Khulna Power Company had earlier informed the PDB that the plant would be commercially operated from September

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Y-8 makes 3 round trips in 2 days Bureaucracy at work while exporters cry hoarse

By Toufique Imrose Khalidi and Inam Ahmed

While exporters are scrambling for space on the lone chartered plane to ferry their stuck-up cargo to Chittagong, operators of the aircraft are fighting a tough battle.

Angry, frustrated garment exporters yesterday complained of non-cooperation from officials of Civil Aviation Authority of Bangladesh (CAAB) and Biman, which they said was causing unnecessary delays.

Procedural problems also led to delays and reduction in the frequency of emergency flights to and from Chittagong by the Y-8 aircraft from Iran, hired by a local firm. Finally, it required intervention from the Prime Minister's Office to make a second flight at 10:00 last night.

Instructions from the highest authorities made the CAAB machinery work, but Biman staff at both airports remained unresponsive. Several exporters who personally supervised the work at Dhaka airport said Biman officials were refusing to

provide adequate logistic support for loading and unloading.

Under an arrangement with BGMEA, the aircraft was supposed to shuttle at least six times a day to take export cargo to the port city and bring emer-

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Rubel murder

Charge sheet likely next week

By Staff Correspondent

The CID is expected to submit charge sheet in the Rubel murder case sometime next week, according to official sources.

They ruled out the possibility of seeking fresh remand of the arrested accused.

A source answered in the negative when asked if there

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The Daily Star ROUND TABLE TODAY ON

Coping with Floods: Relief, Rehabilitation & Rebuilding the Economy

Morning: 10 am - 1 pm: Relief & Rehabilitation

Afternoon: 2 pm - 5 pm: Rebuilding the Economy

Venue: IBA Auditorium, Dhaka University

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