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PHOTO: STAR

Stagnated rainwater flows just below the houses on the lowlands of Gulshan in the city yesterday. A report forecasts that the rise in the water level of rivers will worsen the flood situation in the country.

Flood in full flow Nine more unions go under water

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The flood situation in many districts has worsened over the last 24 hours as the rivers continued swelling due to continued rain in some of the districts.

Flood situation in Noakhali, Gaibandha, Jessore, Satkhira, Sunamganj, Kishoreganj and Gazipur worsened owing to continued rains in the districts.

In Gaibandha, nine new unions were flooded due to continuous rain. Some of the worst affected villages in these areas are Ramchandrapur, Kanchipara, Jumarbari and Haldia.

Reports said crops on about 500 acres of land were inundated as fresh water entered the areas from the Ghagat River flowing nearby.

In Satkhira, most of the areas in Nagarghata Union were inundated yesterday and day before yesterday as rain continued in the areas. Moreover, 50 villages in Jalalpur, Khalipur, Magura, Tala and Khalishpur unions in the Sadar Upazila were inundated in last two days.

In Kishoreganj Sadar, Kharampatti, Station Road and Jorapukur areas were inundated due to incessant rain in last two days. Meantime, Nikli, Ashtagram, Itna and Mithamoin upazila were also inundated due to rain in the district.

In Gazipur, Darshunurayan village under Sadar Thana was inundated due to incessant rain. A three-year old girl died when a concrete wall collapsed after rain in the village.

The Flood Forecasting and Warning Centre (FFWC), meanwhile, said two rivers in as many districts was flowing above the danger level. Out of a total of 46 points in the country, the water level at 29 points have increased in last 24 hours while it has gone down in 15 points.

In Sunamganj, the Surma was flowing 17 cm above the danger level, while in Khagrachhari the Halda was 15 cm above the danger mark, official sources said.

The Jamuna at Chilmari is likely to rise by five cm though it is now flows 95 cm below the danger level. At Bahadurabad, it is 65 cm below the danger level and likely to rise by eight cm.

At Sirajganj, the Jamuna is likely to swell by 13 cm and is flowing 80 cm below the danger level. At Aricha, the water level is likely to rise by 21 cm although it is 49 cm below the danger mark.

The Padma at Goalondo is likely to rise by 23 cm and flowing 71 cm below the danger level and Bhagyakul river is likely to rise by 12 cm and flowing 34 cm below danger level.

The FFWC also said the Surma at Kanaighat is likely to fall by 19 cm.

Meanwhile, the Weather Forecast Centre in the city said yesterday that moderate cloud concentration existed over south and south-western part of Bangladesh, which may cause localised rain-fed flood in this region.

Flash flood in the north-eastern part of the Meghna basin is likely to improve further, the forecast added.

Natore DC on a new tune

ANWAR ALI, Natore

Natore's deputy commissioner (DC), currently under fire from different quarters including journalists for cancelling the declaration of Dainik Uttarbanga Barta, yesterday said the main reason for the cancellation order was the daily's irregular publication and not the misprinting of names of the president and the prime minister.

"The printing mistake is not the principle cause, the declaration was cancelled considering only the irregular publication of the newspaper," DC Sadar Uddin Ahmed said while talking to The Daily Star yesterday, adding that there was no political reason behind the order.

"I was one of the admirers of the newspaper and felt irritated having missed it often. While inquiring about the missing papers, I came to know that the newspaper was not published regularly and the decision for the cancellation was taken chiefly considering that matter," he elaborated.

However, the official order signed by Ahmed as the district magistrate (DM) clearly shows that the issue of misprinting of names of the country's president and prime

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AL walks out on gas export

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Awami League yesterday walked out of and then rejoined the House following a half-hour uproar over an unscheduled debate on proposed gas export and unceremonious exit of the president.

Led by Leader of the Opposition in the House Sheikh Hasina, the AL legislators walked out at 9:15 last night before rejoining the proceedings ten minutes later.

Earlier the session began at 7:30 last night with acting Speaker Akhtar Hamid Siddique in the chair.

The parliament went into session yesterday following a recess of over a week after passage of the national budget for 2002-03 on June 29.

Following the question-answer session, Hasina took the floor on point of order and protested a state-

ment by State Minister for Energy AKM Mosharraf Hossain.

Hossain had earlier blamed the previous AL government for creating a situation in which gas export became a necessity by signing too many production sharing contracts (PSCs).

As the Treasury benches clamoured over allowing the opposition leader too much time to speak on a point of order, the Chair reminded Hasina repeatedly to cut short her speech.

Hasina told the parliament that gas export was an option kept open for consideration only after meeting the domestic requirement of gas for 50 years. She said it is hard to understand why the present government was desperate to exporting gas.

"I want the House to have a

general discussion on the gas issue so that the people understand who upheld the country's interest and who did not," she said.

As Hasina talked about president AQM Badruddoza Chowdhury's exit and law and order, the BNP lawmakers started shouting and throwing files.

Regarding the unceremonious exit of the president, Hasina alleged that Chowdhury was removed through 'state-terrorism'. She demanded an explanation on the prime minister's claim of 'conspiracy against her government'.

Then the acting Speaker gave floor to Health and Family Welfare Minister Khandakar Mosharraf Hossain. Hossain alleged that the immediate past AL government flagged off underhand gas deals.

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Rundown roads cry for care

DCC fund not enough for maintenance

MORSHED ALI KHAN

Lack of maintenance for over a year due to severe fund crunches in the Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) has left most of the city's 2,200 kilometre road connections in a dilapidated condition, sources said.

Top officials in the Nagar Bhaban said the DCC did not conduct any road maintenance during the entire period of the fiscal 2001-2002, as it would fail to pay its staff due to the financial crisis.

During the period, emergency maintenance and 'face-saving' works on some designated VIP roads took place under the Dhaka Urban Transport Project (DUTP).

In the process, the DCC saved Tk 60 cores only to pay back its loans to different organisations. During the same fiscal, hardly any of the 100 ward commissioners received allocations for development work in their respective constituencies, rendering the inner city's lanes and by-lanes in terrible conditions.

With the monsoon rains pouring down incessantly over the last few weeks, sufferings of the city dwellers mounted sharply, as almost all the roads in the city became dangerously pot-holed. Worst hit are the those living in densely populated poor localities where road repair work has not taken place for years.

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Freedom Sohel on remand

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The city's most wanted criminal, Sohel Chowdhury alias Freedom Sohel, arrested in Tangail Saturday night, is now on a five-day remand for interrogation.

The Detective Branch (DB) of the police arrested Sohel, one of the 23 top-listed criminals of the city, at Mirzapur old bus stand in Tangail.

Sources said a DB squad went to Mirzapur on a tip-off that Sohel was going there to take shelter in his friend's residence. The team, waiting at the bus stand, caught Sohel when he reached there at around 9:30pm.

Accused in a number of murder and other cases, Sohel is nicknamed Freedom Sohel for his allegiance to the Freedom Party. He hails from Rajapur village under Dagonbhuiyan of Feni. He resided at 1063, Malibagh Bazar Road under Khilgaon Police Station and spread

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Red carpet awaits Thai PM today

Road link, aviation hubs to top Khaleda-Shinawatra talks

M ANWARUL HAQ

A warm welcome awaits Thai Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra when he arrives today at 4:00pm on a three-day official visit.

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia will receive him at the Zia International Airport. The Thai premier will lead an over 60-member entourage including Foreign Minister Furakirat Sathirathi, Commerce Minister Adisai Bodharamik, officials and businessmen.

Setting up of road network, increased private sector investment and joint business cooperation are expected to figure prominently during official talks between Khaleda and her Thai counterpart tomorrow at 9:00am. The prospects of developing the Chittagong's Shah Amanat Airport and Chiang Mai airport as new regional aviation hubs will also be discussed.

Besides bilateral matters, the two premiers are also expected to talk regional and international issues.

The Thai prime minister is



Thaksin Shinawatra

expected to promote a proposed direct road link from Dhaka to Thailand through Myanmar. Once in place, it will act as the second Asian Highway and connect Dhaka and Bangkok directly.

Chittagong-Chiang Mai Connection

In the run up to establishing closer link, Bangladesh and Thailand are likely to sign an air

SEE PAGE 11 COL 1

Musharraf slams door on Benazir, Sharif

AFP, Islamabad

Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf on Saturday issued a decree that effectively bars former prime ministers Benazir Bhutto and Nawaz Sharif from holding power ever again, officials said.

In terms of the Qualification for Public Office Order 2002, anyone who has held the office of prime minister or provincial chief minister

for two terms "shall not be qualified to hold the office again," a senior government official told AFP.

The law apparently gives legal effect to Musharraf's repeated assertion that the two former prime ministers would not be allowed to regain political power as, according to him, they plundered national resources and ruined the economy during their rule.

Both are living abroad in exile:

Sharif in Saudi Arabia and Bhutto in Dubai and London.

They reportedly plan to return home to launch a struggle for the restoration of democracy in the country.

Bhutto left Pakistan in 1998 when Sharif was in power because of alleged victimisation by her main political adversary. She had been convicted of corruption.

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