

Lakhs marooned in northern dists, fresh areas flooded

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Several lakh people in the northern regions were marooned as swollen rivers swamped fresh areas, but the flood situation improved slightly in Sylhet areas.

Flood forecasters said nearly two lakh people were marooned in Kurigram, Gaibandha, Nilphamari, Lalmonirhat, Rangpur, Bogra and Sirajganj districts.

"More low-lying areas of Kurigram, Gaibandha, Bogra, Jamalpur, Sirajganj and Tangail districts are likely to be flooded," they added.

The Flood Forecasting and Warning Centre, however, said the water levels in the Brahmaputra and Jamuna slowed the pace of rising but were flowing above danger level at Chilmari and Bahadurabad yesterday morning.

It said as the situation in the eastern Indian state of Assam took a serious turn, the water levels in the rivers were likely to rise soon.

But floodwaters from Sylhet, Sunamganj, Moulvi Bazar, Habiganj and Comilla are likely to recede, improving the situation.

The Water Development Board said the Brahmaputra and Jamuna



A woman rows a boat to higher land for safety from a swamped area in Mohammadpur yesterday, taking her belongings in it. The lowlands on the outskirts of the city are still under stagnated rainwater.

PHOTO: STAR

15 feared dead in motor boat capsized in Meghna

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barisal

Fifteen passengers are feared dead after a motor boat with about 70 passengers on board capsized in the Meghna off Hizla in Barisal yesterday afternoon, survivors and locals said.

Fishermen and villagers rescued 55 of the passengers from the river.

Shamsu Munshi, a survivor, told The Daily Star that the boat sank for overloading passengers and goods including rice, potatoes and betel nuts.

The boat, bound for Char Killabazar from Harinathpur Bazar in Hizla upazila, went down near Khunnibazar village, 20 minutes into its journey.

Fishermen rushed to the scene and swung into rescue operation.

Most of the passengers were women and children, survivors said.

Details were, however, sketchy.

Housewife gangraped in Feni: 2 arrested

UNB, Feni

Police Thursday night arrested two people for raping a housewife who went on a river trip to see the flood condition in Chhagalnaiya upazila.

The 20-year-old housewife from Jatrabari in Dhaka, who went to a relative's house in the district town, later hired along with a friend a trawler to see the flood.

Babul and Nur Nabi, who boarded the same trawler, forced the young woman's friend get down at Jelay Para by the river Muhuri in the evening.

They took the woman to a nearby place where five people raped her.

On Thursday night, police rescued the young housewife and arrested two rapists, Abul Bashar and Abul Kalam, from the spot while others managed to flee.

	Sun Rises	Sun Sets
July 05		6-50 pm
July 06	5-16 am	

Prayer Timings		
July 05		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fair	4-15	4-45
Zohr	12-45	1-20
Asr	5-00	5-15
Maghrib	6-55	7-00
Esha	8-15	8-45

Source: Islamic Foundation

No go-ahead yet for arsenic removal plants

Five technologies await approval

NAIMUL HAQ

Chemical-based arsenic removal plants have been waiting for approval from the authorities for the last one year.

As a result of the delay, hundreds and thousands of people affected by groundwater arsenic have not received safe water options to be provided by the government.

Five technologies, Alcan, Sidko, Tetrahedron, READ-F and Sono, validated for field test, are still awaiting approval. Once they get certificate from the authorities, the arsenic removal household plants can be given to affected people.

The government on July 20 last year issued a gazette notification that stated, "All chemical-based arsenic filters or removal plants must obtain certification from the Bangladesh Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (BCSIR) before being marketed for public use."

The reports on validation of the technologies were supposed to be submitted by May 31 but till Wednesday last none of the technologies have been approved for use and the authorities concerned could not explain the delay.

The BCSIR is working in collaboration with the Ontario Centre for Environmental Technology

Advancement, OCETA, for obtaining technical know-how on validating chemical-based arsenic removal plants.

The idea was to complete the task of the technical advisory committee (TAG) which earlier recommended wide use of chemical based-technologies without doing physical analyses of the technologies.

In January 2002, the BCSIR asked the Bangladesh Arsenic Mitigation Water Supply Project (BAMWSP) to submit the first batch of technologies for 'Environmental Technology Verification -- Arsenic Mitigation'

SEE PAGE 11 COL 6



A grab from Al-Jazeera TV yesterday shows the image of Saddam Hussein during the broadcast of his taped message dated June 14.

Jihad cells formed across Iraq: Saddam

AFP, Dubai

Qatar's Al-Jazeera satellite television station yesterday broadcast what it said was a taped message from ousted Iraqi president Saddam Hussein dated June 14.

Saddam said "jihad cells made up of Iraqi male and female fighters have been formed on a large scale" throughout Iraq to fight US-led coalition forces occupying the country.

The former Iraqi leader, whose whereabouts has been a mystery since the fall of Baghdad on April 9, said he and his aides were still in Iraq.

Govt destroying the 3 pillars of state: Hasina

UNB, Dhaka

Leader of the Opposition Sheikh Hasina has accused the BNP-Jamaat government for destroying what she said "the three pillars of the state" -- the judiciary, legislature and the executive.

Hasina alleged that the government is politicising the judiciary, not allowing the opposition to speak in parliament and using the bureaucracy to serve its purpose.

"If the judiciary, legislature and the executive are destroyed, the existence of the state will be at stake ... and this government is doing that," she told the newly elected office-bearers of Gopalganj District Bar Association here yesterday afternoon.

She blamed the government for playing foul with the judiciary and called upon all bar associations and lawyers across the country to raise their voice against this.

Hasina said the chief justice has been appointed superseding two

SEE PAGE 11 COL 1

Myanmar FM arrives today

UNB, Dhaka

Myanmar Foreign Minister U Win Aung arrives in Dhaka tonight carrying a letter of the Myanmar head of government for Prime Minister Khaleda Zia.

He will hold a meeting with Foreign Minister M Morshed Khan at 11 am tomorrow. Later, the visiting foreign minister will call on Prime Minister Khaleda Zia and hand over the letter.

Myanmar foreign minister will leave Dhaka on Monday.

Federer enters Wimbledon final

AFP, London

Swiss fourth seed Roger Federer bludgeoned US fifth seed Andy Roddick 7-6 (8/6), 6-3, 6-3 in 1hr 43min Friday to race into the final of the men's singles at Wimbledon, setting up a meeting with Australia's Mark Philippoussis.

Philippoussis, like Federer reaching his first Wimbledon final, earlier demolished 13th seed Sebastien Grosjean of France 7-6 (7/3), 6-3, 6-3 in 1hr 56 min.

MORE STORIES ON PAGE 13

Another coalition partner pushes for power share

SHAKHAWAT LITON

Another minor partner in the four-party coalition government has renewed pressure on the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) to carve a niche in the council of ministers.

The fresh push for a berth in the cabinet came after Fazlul Haq Amini, lawmaker of the Islami Oikya Jote (IOJ), another alliance partner, threatened to step down from the Jatiya Sangsad, if party demands are not met.

With the declaration of Amini's resignation, the Bangladesh Jatiya Party (BJP), with Nazir Rahman Manzur at the helm, quickened its

efforts for incorporation of its top leader in the council of ministers.

"If the prime minister appoints Amini as a cabinet member this time, the Bangladesh Jatiya Party will get another chance for bargaining," said a top alliance leader requesting anonymity. "So the prime minister has to take cautious steps," he added.

BJP Secretary General Kazi Firoz Rashid told The Daily Star yesterday that his party has been continuing discussion with the BNP to reach an amicable settlement of the issue.

"As a partner of the alliance, we are demanding representation to the government," said Firoz

Rashid.

In a joint statement, the leaders of BJP Dhaka city unit and several of its front organisations demanded inclusion of Nazir Rahman in the government and recognition of the IOJ leadership to fulfil election pledges.

The BJP's fresh demand came ahead of the July 6 rally and procession of the ruling alliance against the 'anarchy' of the opposition Awami League. The BJP leaders reminded the BNP that it might be difficult for them to express solidarity with the national forces, as frustration has surfaced among them.

SEE PAGE 11 COL 8

AL plans to wrap up thana, dist councils by Sept

REAZ AHMAD

The Awami League (AL) plans to complete the councils of its district and thana units by September after missing the second deadline on June 30, party sources said.

They said a meeting of the AL secretariat at the party's Dhanmondi office yesterday agreed to give the grassroots units three more months till September to hold the councils in view of the ongoing floods in many regions.

The party plans to launch a massive anti-government movement in the winter after putting its own house in order through the councils.

The final decision on the extension of the council deadline will, however, come from a meeting of the AL Central Working Committee (ALCWC), the sources said.

The next ALCWC meeting is slated for July 10, four days ahead of the party's planned anti-government showdown at Paltan Maidan.

AL President Sheikh Hasina will address the July 15 public rally to

denounce the government's 'misrule and the intention to make the Jatiya Sangsad ineffective'.

The secretariat meeting, chaired by party General Secretary Abdul Jalil, demanded a judicial probe into the ammunition and explosive haul in Bogra and condemned 'an attack' on the AL rally at Luxmipur, allegedly by Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) activists.

The AL has so far held councils of 280 of 470 thana units and three of 71 organisational districts. Councils of Dhaka, Shariatpur and Manikganj districts are scheduled to be held this month.

September 30 last year was the first deadline for the council of thana units and October 31 for district units. The party deferred the councils due to 'persecution of its political opponents by the ruling four-party alliance'.

The AL held its central council on December 26 and formed a new central committee bringing together old guards and fresh faces to perk up the party after its October 2001 ballot debacle.

Berlusconi slur row reignites

BBC ONLINE

The speaker of the European Parliament has called on Italian Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi to make further amends for insulting a German MEP, before the dispute can be considered closed.

Parliamentary speaker Pat Cox welcomed Berlusconi's partial apology to German Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder for his attack on Martin Schulz, a German member of the European Parliament who he compared to a Nazi.

But Cox said the Italian prime minister had to apologise to the parliament itself.

Berlusconi, whose country has taken over the presidency of the European Union, is meeting to EU commissioners in Rome on Friday.

Berlusconi made the controversial remark during a speech on Wednesday.

On Thursday, German Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder said he considered the matter "closed" after Berlusconi told him he regretted likening Mr Schulz to a Nazi concentration camp guard.

But Cox said the incident "happened on the floor of the European Parliament, not in Berlin".

"There is a need for clarification

SEE PAGE 11 COL 1

DOWN TO EARTH

Indiscriminate parking adds to traffic jam

ASM NURUNNABI

Of late, the city's parking problems have been growing at an alarming rate, adding to the frightening traffic situation fraught with irregularities and indiscipline one could possibly imagine. Apart from the locust-like proliferation of rickshaws, which is the one of the main causes of the intractable traffic jams, the increasing trend of

parking irregularities also greatly accounts for traffic disorder.

With the growing number of cars and other motor vehicles hitting the roads every day, along with the hordes of rickshaws jostling for space on busy roads, availability of parking space has become a very difficult proposition. Under the circumstances, random parking of cars, trucks and buses on busy thoroughfares

further narrows the road space creating horrendous traffic jams in the city.

In developed countries, there are parking lots in busy commercial zones, shopping arcades and similar other places where traffic is very heavy indeed. Many of these parking places are multistoried built either under or

SEE PAGE 11 COL 7

Fish trader, night guard murdered in Khulna

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Two persons were murdered in Rupsha and Baliagata of Khulna district in the early hours of yesterday.

Fish trader Alamgir Shaikh, 24, of Putimari village under Rupsha police station was abducted by outlaws from his house at Putimari Road at around 1:30 am and then strangled him.

His body was recovered from a canal in Putimari area.

Local people said Alamgir was also a police informant.

SEE PAGE 11 COL 3