

Secretaries appear

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exempted from court appearance for yesterday.

The home secretary and the acting PSO, however, did not submit their replies to a court ruling and their lawyer, senior advocate TH Khan, sought more time for preparing the replies. The court asked the two to come up with replies by August 19 and set August 22 for next hearing.

The acting chief election commissioner, another respondent in the case, meanwhile submitted his reply, but the court found it incomplete for not containing the returning officer's (RO) views about the army deployment.

The EC earlier pleaded with the court that the RO did not have time to submit a complete report because of the current floods. Although the RO is not a respondent in the case, the court yesterday morning ordered him to submit his reply in two weeks.

After passing the order yesterday morning, the court received a report on army deployment at 70 centres from the RO. Immediately after receiving the report, the court summoned the lawyers for both sides in the afternoon and told them that it

would partly change its earlier order today to that end.

Following a contempt petition filed by Bikalpa Dhara Bangladesh candidate Abdul Mannan, the High Court Division Bench of Justice MA Wahhab Miah and Justice Zinat Ara on July 12 asked the four top government officials to explain in 10 days why contempt proceedings should not be drawn against them for not deploying army at all polling centres in the July 1 by-election in line with its June 29 directives.

Both the principal secretary and the defence secretary in their replies said that Armed Forces Division is responsible for army deployment.

Responding to a prayer, the court gave conditional exemption to the PM's principal secretary, the defence secretary and the home secretary from personal appearance on condition that they appear in court as and when required for the case.

Barrister Amir-Ul-Islam and Advocate MK Rahman appeared for contempt petitioner Mannan while Advocate Khandakar Mahbubuddin Ahmed and Advocate Jaynul Abedin were present on behalf of the respondents.

DFP DG drags on even after transfer

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The director general (DG) of the Department of Films and Publications (DFP) has not yet joined the office he was transferred to over two weeks back.

DG Syed Mahbubur Rahman was transferred to National Institute of Mass Communication on July 8 but is still holding his previous office at DFP. He has been accused of gross corruption and a process is on for termination of his service.

Official sources said the Ministry of Information subsequently appointed Joint Secretary (Development) Mamunur Rashid Chowdhury as the DG for the interim period but he could not join as Mahbubur is still holding office.

"How can I join the DFP as the position is not vacant? I'll join as soon as the post is left vacant," Mamunur told The Daily Star yesterday.

When asked, Mahbubur said officials usually get time to continue their previous offices even after transfer. "I've informed the secretary of the ministry about my delay in leaving DFP," he added.

The secretary in-charge of the Ministry of Information was not available for comment.

However, highly placed sources at the ministry said DG Mahbubur was supposed to be suspended or made OSD (officer on special duty) when corruption charge was framed against him after approval of the president and prime minister.

The sources said high-level investigations twice proved massive corruption of DG Mahbubur long back. But he was either suspended from service or made OSD because of his links with some influential officials at the Prime Minister's Office.

Senior officials said there is no such instance in the administration of an official taking so much time for joining new office within Dhaka after transfer.

They suspect the DG is trying to cancel his transfer order and continue in the DFP as the department is currently carrying on some development projects involving a huge amount.

Criminals shoot cop's wife, commit robbery

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Criminals shot a policeman's wife and looted cash, gold ornaments and electrical appliances from their Ibrahimpur house in Kafrul yesterday apparently due to a rivalry with one of her sons.

Police said up to seven youths allegedly led by local criminals Taj, Kamrul, Shaj and Idris entered the house at around 7:00am. They shot Sumi, 35, wife of constable Abdur Rashid, now posted to Lama in Bandarban, in the stomach and committed robbery.

Critically wounded, Sumi is receiving treatment at Dhaka Medical College Hospital. Sumi alleged the criminals looted Tk 25,000, a television, VCR, a mobile phone set and ornaments weighing four tola.

She said the criminals were enraged at her son Sumon as he asked for money that he lent them. They also appeared on Friday and threatened to kill Sumon prompting his mother to file a case.

Hoax flyer

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newspaper ad had described the handbills as a hoax and said they did not publish those.

"We neither have nor publish any rankings of this nature," it said. "The abuse of our logo and material in this way is unlawful, and we shall take appropriate action against the perpetrators," it added.

The flyer said "British Council, prestigious body governing O/A level examinations in Bangladesh for the first time had taken the burden of ranking out some of the best teachers and schools. This has been issued only in order to help the parents and guardians."

The multi-colour handbill contained names and telephone numbers of 10 teachers on different subjects including Biology, Physics, English Language, Chemistry, Accounting, Economics, Commerce, Bengali, Maths and Computer Studies.

Such use of contact numbers of teachers has made people even more suspicious about the motive behind the distribution of the flyer. It also published names of 10 private English medium schools. Most of those schools are situated in Dhanmondi Residential Area.

Besides, the back page of the flyer ran an advert for a Business English Course said to be administered by the British Council.

Referring to the use of phone number in the handbill one former teacher of a private English medium school said, "It's outrageous and teacher of a school should not involve himself in private tuition."

BNP, AL, JP top

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Ershad-led faction of Jatiya Party (JP) -- confessed of violating the code in their election campaign, an EIC report to the Election Commission (EC) said.

Censuring the untoward law breaking by the three political heavyweights, Rahman said, "If they were responsible in their election campaigns, perhaps there would have been no incident at all of election code violation and the rising tension too would have been more diffused."

"I hope, from now on, they will behave themselves, keeping within the limits set by the codes, in which they must be well versed considering the wealth of political and voting experience they have accumulated," the election regulator said in an advisory tone.

He also said the EC, a quasi-judicial body, will take stern actions if the code breaching continues. "The Election Commission has directed the electoral inquiry committee to keep on sharp monitoring

to detect any unlawful activity by anyone at the hustings."

The EC also asked the EIC to probe an allegation of code transgression by the director general of Gazipur agriculture directorate and a deputy director of primary education department. The EIC was also ordered to probe into the frequent construction of gates on roads and streets in the constituency.

The Acting CEC yesterday also instructed the returning officer of the by-election and Gazipur police super to take necessary steps whenever a case of code violation is detected. "They told me that they already have arranged for such steps," he added.

Ruling coalition candidate Prof Mannan is expected to appear before the commission today to clarify his position in relation to an EIC-alleged code transgression in his electioneering. On the ground of an EIC probe report that made the accusation against Mannan, the EC summoned him last Thursday.

Swiss aid slashed

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"But we can't implement some of the projects or take up new projects as we're still waiting for green signal from the government."

Citing various problems, including delay in the process of approval and implementation of the projects, he said if the money is not spent within the stipulated time, it will go back to other countries.

"Money is ready, everything is ready. But if you can't spend it timely, it will go back to other countries like Africa, Afghanistan and Iraq," he said.

The European diplomat also pointed out the slide in law and order, hostage-taking, corruption and political hostility as detrimental factors to foreign investment. Foreign investors little know about "facilities and big possibilities" in Bangladesh to develop trade and commerce relations.

He was also critical about delays in establishment of independent anti-corruption commission, separation of the judiciary and appointment of ombudsmen promised by the government at the Bangladesh Development Forum Meetings.

About the government decision on allowing trade unions in the EPZs under what he called "American force" Casserini said, "I think this development is not very much in favour to gain more foreign investment in EPZs" where Swiss companies invested money.

The envoy noted that Bangladesh would gain quicker development if the nagging problems could be resolved. Focussing on government-opposition dialogue to resolve the problems, he said it would be difficult to find solution if the ruling party and the opposition did not talk to or listen to each other.

In reply to a question, he said more than 120 Swiss companies, including Nestle, Holcim, Novartis and Ciba Geigy have direct investment in Bangladesh and are in the trade.

About two-way annual trade that amounts to \$60-65 million, he said actual trade figure is much higher than the official statistics as some Swiss companies are buying goods from here and selling those to EU and other countries, which is not accounted in the bilateral trade turnover.

Switzerland is mostly importing garments, food, handicrafts, pharmaceuticals and leather products from Bangladesh.

Casserini said Bangladesh is on the list of the countries to receive help from the state-owned Swiss Import Promotion Programme (Sippo) to help Bangladesh's exports to Switzerland and other countries. The Sippo is now working to help develop Bangladesh's frozen food, shrimp, bio-shrimp and other facilities in the fisheries sector.

Besides, Switzerland is trying to assist some select jute exporters to have better products and better qualities to compete in the international market, how to use jute by-products in the plastic industry, develop pulp industry and organics.

In reply to a question, the envoy said Bangladesh and Switzerland are planning to sign an agreement on avoidance of double taxation. He said a Swiss company is planning to set up a hotel management school in Dhaka.

PM assures

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programmes, saying that army has been deployed in many worst-hit areas to help the affected people.

All the nine upazilas in Sirajganj and many areas of Dhunat and Sariakandi of Bogra have been severely affected by the floods.

The prime minister mentioned some post-flood rehabilitation programmes, including permanent shelter to those who have lost homes, free supply of seedlings to the farmers and adequate farm loans, suspending interest for few months.

She said sudden onrush of water from upstream increased the extent of damage by the floods.

During her brief speeches, the prime minister said she came to see for herself the sufferings of flood-affected people, to stand by them, provide assistance, console them as well as to see whether relief is being distributed properly.

She distributed rice, saris and lungis among the affected women and men at Ranigram and Zia Crossing at Shailabari. She also visited the flood-hit Zia grove in Sirajganj.

In Dhunat, she visited the flood-damaged areas along the river Jamuna at Dhunat Bazar and distributed rice, saris and lungis among the victims.

She also distributed relief among the affected people at Digholkandi in Sariakandi upazila.

During her speeches Khaleda said, "Usually we take floods as a curse but flooding is no curse. Though people suffer much, it is a blessing in disguise as floodwater brings alluvium, stones and fish. Alluvium increases soil fertility."

The prime minister said the government is closely monitoring the flood situation round the clock and taking measures according to the need.

She said higher officials have also been sent to the flood-affected districts to coordinate the relief and rehabilitation operations.

In Sirajganj, State Minister for Power Iqbal Hasan Mahmud, who is also the minister-in-charge of the district, Abdul Mannan Talukdar MP, MA Matin MP, pounashava Chairman Noor-e-Alam Helal and other local BNP leaders were present during relief distribution.

In Dhunat and Sariakandi, Whip Rezaul Bari Dina, GM Siraj MP and Kazi Rafique MP were present during the relief distribution.

The two others are former TCB chairman Brigadier (Retd) AKM Azizul Islam, who died, and Managing Director of Amin and Associates Ltd. Aminul Haq.

HC stays

FROM PAGE 1
Municipal Corporation (Taxation) Rules, 1986 has no provision for self-assessment of holding tax. The step taken by the DCC is arbitrary and mala fide as it has not followed the due process of law.

It also encroached on the fundamental rights of the city dwellers, he said.

9,500 primary

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Development Programme II (PEDP-II) involving an outlay of about Tk 5,000 crore for expansion and qualitative improvement of primary education.

The education ministry has received the highest allocation of Tk 7,680 crore in the budget for fiscal 2004-05 against Tk 6,740 crore in the 2003-04 budget.

The Daily Star carried a report on the school teachers on July 7.

Pabna municipal commissioner shot dead

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pabna

Unidentified criminals yesterday shot dead a municipality commissioner within a few yards of the offices of deputy commissioner and superintendent of police in Pabna.

Rabiul Islam Kawser, 32, was the commissioner of Pabna Municipality Ward No 3 and organising secretary of the ward unit of Bangladesh Nationalist Party's (BNP) youth front Jaiyatnabadi Jubo Dal.

Police and witnesses said a gang of four to five at around 12:45pm shot point blank in his head when he came out of his office to go home. The attackers fled the scene blasting bombs.

With two bullets in the head, Rabiul was rushed to Pabna General Hospital and later shifted to Rajshahi Medical College Hospital where the attending doctor declared him dead.

Police said the killing might be a sequel to previous enmity. Rabiul has quite a few cases against him with Pabna Police Station.

Additional police forces were deployed in the district town to defuse tension in the area.

UNB adds: President of District BNP Sirajul Islam Sardar and General-Secretary Engineer Habibur Rahman Tota and Pabna Municipality Chairman Kamrul Hassan Mintu condemned the killing and demanded immediate arrest of the culprits.

AL MP

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sensational Srikantha murder case last month.

The order came upon an appeal by the state against the lower court judgement.

The bench of Justices Mohammad Abdul Quddus and AFM Abdur Rahman decided to hear petitions of the state and those condemned to death. Five were handed death sentence.

The beheaded body of Srikantha was found in front of Hathazari Police Station a day after he left home with a friend on April 19 last year.

His mother filed a case and the police submitted charge sheet against 17 persons including ABM Fazlul Karim MP.

One-third Dhaka

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The Buriganga rose by 10 centimetres (cm) yesterday, flowing at 47cm above the danger level. The Balu swelled by 10 cm and was flowing 180 cm above the red mark, the Shitalakha at Narayanganj swelled to 116 cm above the red mark and the Turag was flowing 104 cm above the danger level yesterday.

Ministry

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The ministry also decided to cancel the certificate of Kashem and file cases with the Marine Court against Abdur Rahim, associate professor of Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (Buet), who issued inclining and stability certificate of Lighting Sun.

Kazi Zafar

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Judge Mohammad Rezaul Karim Khan of the Special Court for Dhaka Division gave the verdict.

The judge in his order said charges brought against the accused could not be proved. So they were acquitted of charges.

Earlier, the prosecution and the defence completed their arguments and the court recorded statements of 12 out of 30 prosecution witnesses.

On July 2, 2001, the same court declared Kazi Zafar absconding, issued an arrest warrant against him and fixed July 4, 2001 for judgement of the case. But the court later adjourned the proceedings following a stay order of the High Court.

The Bac in the case filed with Ramna Police Station alleged Kazi Zafar while in office imported 51,000 tonnes of sugar through TCB without inviting any tender that caused a loss of Tk 54.24 lakh.

The Bac filed the case against Kazi Zafar on July 11, 1991 but the IO (investigation officer) pressed charges against Zafar and two others on January 18, 1992.

The two others are former TCB chairman Brigadier (Retd) AKM Azizul Islam, who died, and Managing Director of Amin and Associates Ltd. Aminul Haq.

Indo-Pak clash today

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only game against Bangladesh.

Known as 'Turbanator' for his wicket-taking prowess, Harbhajan has been out of action for several months.

India skipper Sourav Ganguly believed that the toss would not play a factor in the clash of the titans.

50pc RMG units

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It has formed ten taskforces to conduct surveys in 10 zones who reported to their headquarter in Dhaka that a portion of the Dhaka-Chittagong highway at Baushia, near Daudkandi bridge, has gone under water, threatening to disrupt movement of RMG cargo. The highway is the lifeline of the five billion dollar export industry.

According to their survey, some 1,061 units have already been affected in Dhaka while 630 factories in Narayanganj. Besides, 1,117 more units in Dhaka and 500 in Narayanganj will be inundated within next two days if the floodwaters increase by 1-2 inches everyday.

There are some 2,200 RMG factories in Dhaka and 1,200 in Narayanganj.

Over 5 lakh RMG workers, including 3.15 lakh in Narayanganj, have already been affected as they normally reside in the low-lying areas close to their workplaces.

The workers have been making their way to their respective factories mostly on their own. But some factory owners were reportedly trying to provide transport -- mostly boats -- to ferry their workers to and from factories, BGMEA officials said.

They informed that some factory owners have already arranged to accommodate many of their flood-affected workers on the rooftops of their respective factories.

The factories where the ground floors have been inundated, shifted their operations to upper floors under makeshift arrangements to cope up with the situation, they added.

"We're asking the respective factory owners to provide support to the workers as much as possible,"

Iraq militants kidnap

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satellite station said.

Iraq's interim Prime Minister Iyad Allawi visited Cairo this week and discussed the possibility of using Egyptian troops in training Iraq's forces. But no deal was struck and Egyptian officials were quick to emphasise that.

Allawi urged Egypt yesterday not to pander to the kidnappers. "The only way to deal with terrorists is to bring them to justice and to close ranks and we hope that Egypt and the Egyptian government would act accordingly," he said.

Qutb's abduction came four days after he was widely photographed celebrating the release of an Egyptian truck driver kidnapped by insurgents earlier this month. The driver was freed after his Saudi Arabian employer promised to pull out of Iraq.

KIDNAPPING CAMPAIGN
Millenians have seized dozens of foreign workers since April to push demands for foreign troops or foreign companies to leave Iraq. Several hostages have been killed and in at least two cases the hostage-takers' demands have been met.

Kidnappings have been common since the US-led invasion to overthrow Saddam Hussein, but in the early months they appeared mostly to be criminally motivated, with many doctors and businessmen seized and ransom payments demanded.

Since April, however, insurgents -- both foreign fighters and Iraqi nationalist guerrillas -- have got on the game, attacking convoys of vehicles and seizing drivers. Some officials have suggested criminals and militants are working together, sometimes trading hostages among themselves.

Earlier this week, three Indians, three Kenyans and an Egyptian, all drivers working for a Kuwaiti firm, were seized.

The Indian government yesterday said it was doing its best to secure the safe release of three of its nationals.

"Government is in touch with all relevant entities and agencies in Kuwait, Iraq, United States and the Iraqi embassy in New Delhi," national security advisor J.N. Dixit told reporters after a meeting of the

BGMEA President Annisul Haq told the news agency, apprising the trade body's pre-emptive measures to face the flood, one of the worst in recent memory.

He said BGMEA is keeping contact with the Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) mayor and the ward commissioners and will hold a formal meeting with them today (Sunday) to discuss strategy for providing shelter, food, saline and pure drinking water.

Establishments of the DCC, schools and market places, and the factory rooftops could be used for the shelter, Haq added.

The BGMEA president said he was also keeping contact with the ministries of communication, shipping and BIWTC for arranging alternative transportation for RMG export cargoes. "We are trying to make alternatives so that exports are not hampered due to disruption in communication," he said.

During the flood of 1998, Railway had introduced special cargo trains while BIWTC arranged ferries through the Meghna River up to Comilla from where the cargo could be transported to Chittagong Port. There was also arrangements for special cargo flights.

"We haven't yet sought extension of shipment dates," said Annisul Haq, informing that the foreign buyers were already aware of the flood situation through their local representatives.

RMG units in Basic Industrial estate in Narayanganj are the most affected by the current flood. Other flood-affected units are located in Dhaka's Khilkhet, Badda, Kuril, Natun Bazar, Satarok, Mugda, Goran, Madartek, Bashabo, Rampura, Lalbagh, Waiseghat, Chankharpool, Gandaria and Kamrangir Char.

Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS) -- the government's highest strategic decision-making body.

"We are doing our best to get them released," he added.

The Indian hostages, along with three Kenyans and an Egyptian, are being held by an Iraqi group calling itself Black Flags.

Kenya yesterday pleaded again with kidnappers to release three of its nationals, saying it cannot meet the abductors' new demands.

"We are now requesting that the kidnappers release the Kenyan hostages because their employer has promised to pull out of Iraq," government spokesman Alfred Mutua told AFP.

Ministers, MPs

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Babar, the state minister for home, has demanded 2,000 metric tonnes (MT) rice for the flood-hit people in Netrakona district. The disaster ministry has so far allocated 500 MT, according to the official.

The ministry yesterday allocated another 5,500 MT rice and Tk 52 lakh in cash for the flood victims. With this, the total allocation of rice as relief for distribution among the marooned people reached to around 28,000 MT. The cash amount of relief stands at around Tk 3 crore, the ministry officials said.

Relief has been allocated against 45 districts, according to the disaster ministry.

According to a government estimate, the floods have inundated 13,187-kilometre area, and affected 2.09 crore people. The number of deaths in the deluge has reached 205. Raging floodwaters have destroyed 1.55 lakh houses completely and 16 lakh others partially. A total of 3,911 livestock have died since the flooding began.

The government opened 1,752 centres providing shelter to seven lakh people throughout the flood-affected areas. The flood has affected over 2,000 bridges and culverts and damaged 5,630 kilometres of roads completely and 21,844 kilometres partially.

The onslaught of the rushing floodwaters also damaged crops on 72.76 lakh acres of land completely and 11.65 acres partially, the government estimate says.

Pakistan's new coach Bob Woolmer was however not ready to accept the game as a chance for revenge.

"This game is important not because it's an India-Pakistan game but because if we lose we are out of the tournament. It's a sudden-death situation and it's like the first of three finals for us," said the former England batsman.

Woolmer felt the defending champions had it in them to bounce back despite their recent defeat to India in both Tests and one-dayers on home soil.

"The boys are much more focussed. I don't know why they weren't focussed in the last series but they have really worked very hard in the last two days."

The organisers expect a sell-out crowd as the cliff-hanger is to be played on a public holiday.

River waters roil

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level and sufficient quantities of life saving medicines, medical equipment, saline, water purifying tablets and bleaching powder have been sent there, the state-run news agency BSS quoted DoH sources as saying in the capital yesterday.

The Brahmaputra-Jamuna saw a fall in water level at upstream points. The Ganges-Padma recorded rise at all points except at Pankha and Rajshahi. Most of the rivers in the Meghna and the Southeastern Hill Basin receded further.

Water is flowing seven inches above Dhaka-Aricha highway at nine points Jamuna, Kalganga, Dhaleshwari and Isamoti rose further, deteriorating the situation in Manikganj yesterday.

Most houses and offices remain under three to four feet of water and road links between the district headquarters and Hariampur, Daulatpur, Gheor, Sauria and Singair upazilas were cut off, according to our Manikganj correspondent.

The government distributed 75 paise on an average to each people of seven upazilas of the district where over 12 lakh people are already affected. Local lawmaker and different NGOs distributed relief materials yesterday.

Raging floodwaters are now flowing one foot above the 200-foot stretch of Dhaka-Chittagong highway near the approach road at Meghna-Gomti bridge yesterday, but traffic movement was still on.

"We're still working to drain out the water by putting bricks and sandbags," Roads and Highways Executive Engineer Monjur Ahmed Bhuiyan told The Daily Star at 8:00 last night.

Our Mymensingh correspondent reported that at least nine, mostly children, and 198 cattle of all 12 upazilas drowned in floodwaters last week. Crops on 74,469 acres of land were fully and 66,952 acres partially damaged in the floodwaters.

Reports from our Sherpur correspondent said three people -- Khatun, 50, Murshada, 8, and Amirul, 30, -- drowned in the floodwaters in last two days, pushing the death toll in the district to 23.

Over 5 lakh marooned people still wait to be rescued and locals reported that waterborne diseases are spreading fast among the stranded people, but no medical team is working there.

Reports from Brahmanbaria said all 97 unions of the districts have gone under floodwaters, sending over 19 lakh people marooned and road links in eight upazilas snapped. The rail track between Paghachong and Bathal stations is also under water.

Our Natore correspondent reported over 60 percent areas of Singra upazila, Dharabariasha, Khujipur and Biaghat unions of Guradaspur upazila and Piprul, Brammaspur and Madhnagar unions of Natore upazila have been flooded in the last 24 hours due to heavy rainfall and rise in the water level of Atrai.

Floodwaters inundated three unions of Gopalganj and the Gopalganj-Tekherat road yesterday, our Gopalganj correspondent reported.

People living in the north of Ramsil-Kafulari embankment allegedly cut the dam to save themselves from the floodwaters and local administration employed people to save the embankment.

Our Sylhet correspondent reports that the situation in Sylhet showed a little improvement as floodwaters started receding from different upazilas. But the situation in some upazilas remained static as Kushnara was still bursting its banks.

A new breach on the Kushnara Dyke at Sonasar village in the bordering Jakkaj upazila inundated at least 10 villages