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Floodwaters eddy down to centre, recede from north

Diarrhoea breaks out, death toll now 329; capital reeks of sewage

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Floodwaters continued to roll down to the centre of Bangladesh, swamping much of the capital and pushing the official death toll to 329 yesterday as river waters started receding from northern and northeastern districts.

Diarrhoea and other waterborne diseases and starvation loomed large for the flood-hit people in 41 districts, where the flooding turned catastrophic destroying crops on hundreds of acres, overflowing roads, railroads and flood control dams.

Executive Engineer Selim Bhuiyan of the Flood Forecasting and Warning Centre told The Daily Star that floodwaters are gradually receding from the north and northeast, piling pressure on the central districts.

The flood situation may improve when the water level in the fast-rising Meghna river in Chandpur comes down, he said, adding the Meghna is flowing 92 cm above the danger mark, overtaking records.

Overnight river navigation to the south became unsafe as most rivers

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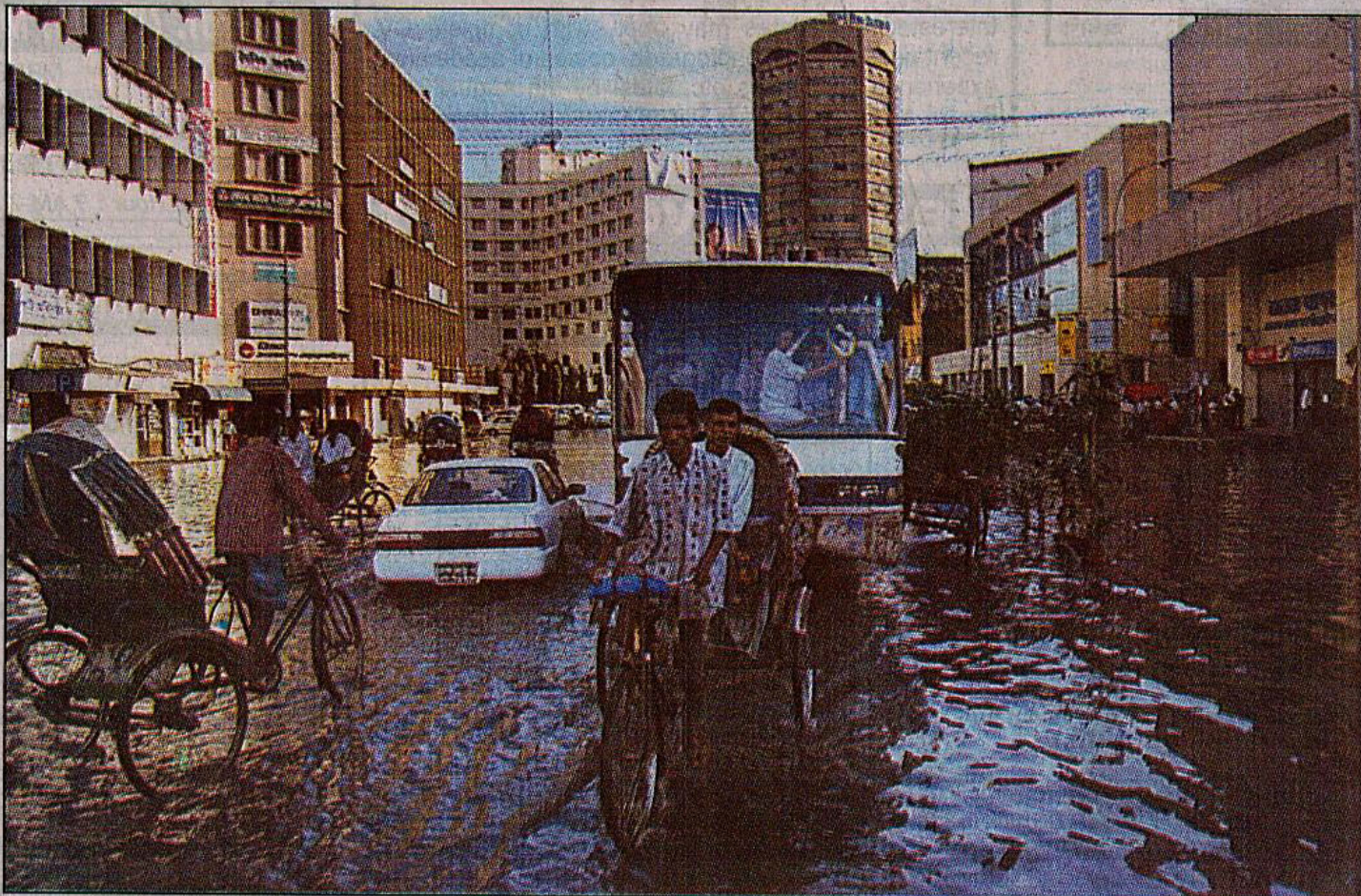


PHOTO: STAR

Mucky and stinking waters flow through roads at the heart of commercial hub, Motijheel, as the sewerage system collapsed at the area. Rivers around the capital continued to swell yesterday, swamping fresh areas.

World responds to flood plights

UN to appeal to int'l community; Britain provides Tk 110cr; IDB 1.2cr; ADB forms monitoring unit; govt plans to assess damage with top donors

STAR REPORT

The world has responded to the humanitarian plight of about 30 million flood victims in Bangladesh with the United Nations (UN) set to appeal to the international community for urgent assistance.

The UN has come up with a

proposal for a help plea worldwide against the backdrop of the government's decision not to make such an appeal by itself.

The British government yesterday announced to provide Tk 110 crore (10 million pound sterling) in aid for flood-hit people while the Islamic Development Bank (IDB)

approved an emergency grant of nearly Tk 1.20 crore (\$200,000).

"Bangladesh is experiencing severe monsoon flooding, the worst since the 1998 floods. The UK is concerned about the deteriorating flood situation in Bangladesh and stands ready to assist, in support of

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Diarrhoea epidemic breaks out

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Diarrhoea outbreak in the flood-affected areas has reached an epidemic proportion although the health ministry is yet to admit it.

The waterborne disease has struck 14, 17,669 people since the beginning of the month, including 3,658 people yesterday, and claimed 14 lives, according to a government estimate. But unofficial estimates put the figure at five to six times higher and the death toll no less than three times the given number.

Private medical practitioners in many districts said they are unable to cope with the increasing rush of patients. Private clinics in many

districts and upazilas are submerged while an increasing number of patients had diarrhoea.

"There is no reason to declare a diarrhoea epidemic," Professor Mizanur Rahman, director general (DG) of health services told The Daily Star yesterday.

"We have sufficient quantities of oral and intravenous saline and today I have ordered for doubling the production."

The DG, however, said the worst form of the diarrhoeal attack is yet to come. "Soon as the floodwater recedes the chances of large-scale diarrhoeal attack will increase. This is common as the bacteria

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PM monitors flood round the clock

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia has started round-the-clock monitoring of overall flood situation through a monitoring cell opened at her office for properly guiding rescue and relief operations across the country.

"The government is conducting relief operation and other necessary tasks in the flood-affected areas without any negligence and coming up with all-out measures responding to the need to overcome any situation in the affected areas," the prime minister said.

She assured that the government would do whatever necessary for the

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150km embankments under deluge threat

Tk 120cr needed for damage repair

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Flooding so far has caused an extensive damage to 700 kilometre of embankment that will need Tk 120 crore for repair, said an assessment by water resources ministry yesterday.

Another 150km of 28 embankments is still at risk of damage, said the assessment report prepared by the Water Development Board (WDB).

Referring to not having an estimate of net losses yet, Amir Khasru, chief engineer (monitor) of WDB yesterday told The Daily Star, "We'll carry out a complete assessment once the flood is over. Because if flood lingers for more days, more embankments will be damaged and the amount of loss will be increased further."

The WDB currently has 9,462 km of embankment across the country,

of which northeastern zone appears to be the worst affected, said a WDB official.

The preliminary report prepared by WDB said 102 km of dam was damaged completely while 504 km of embankment partly. Floods have caused damage also to 85 km of protective work. The WDB urgently needs Tk 50 crore to repair those damages.

Meanwhile, the parliamentary standing committee on water resources ministry yesterday discussed the prevailing situation and asked the ministry to initiate rehabilitation work immediately.

Committee chairman MA Matin presided over the meeting held at the Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban. Committee members and Water Resources Minister Hafizuddin Ahmed, KM Anwarul Islam, Matiar Rahman Talukdar and officials concerned attended the meeting.

Traffic snarls up as city roads go under water

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Commuters in the capital yesterday witnessed severe traffic congestion as some roads in Tejgaon and Gulshan submerged by knee-deep floodwaters.

The traffic approaching towards Farm Gate from Gulshan faced the congestion in Mahakhali when commuters tried to avoid Gulshan Shooting Club crossing, witnesses said.

They said the road stretching from Aarong shop to Gulshan Shooting Club submerged due to a rise of water level in nearby Rampura wetland.

The road in front of Mahakhali inter-district bus terminal suffered acute congestion after raging floodwaters inundated a vast area inside the terminal, a senior official of the traffic department told The Daily Star.

He said transport operators were compelled to park buses along the road in front of the terminal slowing down vehicular movement on the road.

The traffic also slowed down in Motijheel Commercial Area after floodwaters inundated some roads, the official added.

Living by selling out everything

Kamrangirchar dwellers part with their cattle, poultry to get by

JULFIKAR ALI MANIK, back from Kamrangirchar

In Kamrangirchar, close to the capital, the flood has not only made poor old women like Asiya Begum homeless, but it is forcing them to sell their last resources such as cattle and poultry for survival.

For traders like Abdul Rafiq, the flood has brought windfall profit as they are buying cattle cheap and selling them at a high price.

The flood-affected people in Kamrangirchar are spending their days amid uncertainty and without any relief.

Villagers like Asiya Begum were rendered homeless by a dramatic rise in floodwater on Saturday.

Asiya, 65, took shelter at the Al-Hera Community Centre in Kamrangirchar's Sirajnagar area

along with her six goats and two chickens.

The goats have posed another problem for her as she cannot find fodder for them. She had to sell one goat at a throwaway price for her own survival. Yesterday she was trying to sell the remaining five goats.

"I don't have food or shelter for myself. Where shall I keep these goats?" says Asiya.

When she moved to the community centre on Saturday night by a rickshaw-van, she did not have the money to pay for the trip. She sold two of her chickens for Tk 120 to pay him.

"In normal times, I would have sold just one chicken for Tk 120. I sold the goat for Tk 1,000, which actually would have fetched me

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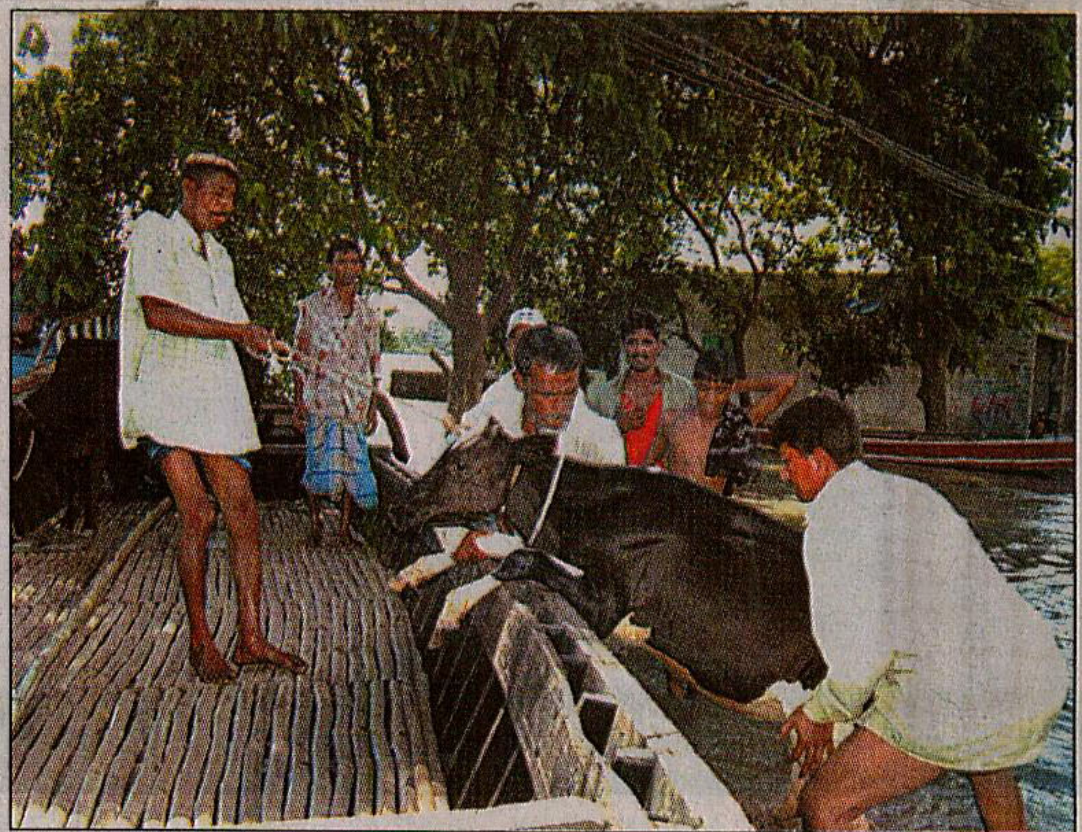


PHOTO: SYED ZAKIR HOSSAIN

Opportunity-seeking traders rush to flood-hit city outskirts where villagers find no way but to sell their cattle and goats at throwaway prices. This photo shows handover of the dear possession of a farmer at Kamrangir Char yesterday.

Sirajganj weavers live on thin line

MORSHED ALI KHAN from Shahjhatpur, Sirajganj

Stranded by floodwaters, thousands mainly from the weaving community in Sirajganj are living close to starvation.

About 20 kilometres from Sirajganj district headquarters, people in Shahjhatpur upazila in the northern district have built flimsy houses for shelter on Nagarbari Highway, without access to drinking water and sanitation.

Now that about 100,000

handlooms in the 13 unions went under water, the weavers who worked on daily and weekly wages have been without work for more than three weeks.

Maidan Ali, 50, of Balshabari was squatting on the road with his four children and wife after he moved to the highway eight days ago. He received 1 kilogram of rice in relief.

"We are now without job for more than three weeks and do not know what to do," Maidan Ali said.

Abu Bakar Siddiqui from

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Proshika chief Qazi Faruque freed on bail

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Proshika chief Qazi Faruque Ahmed was released on bail yesterday, 66 days after he was arrested in fund embezzlement and cheating case.

Faruque's family, friends and lawyers received the ailing NGO chief at Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical College (BSMMU) where he was receiving treatment in a prison cell under a court order.

A team of the National Security Intelligence (NSI) arrested Faruque from the Supreme Court (SC) on

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India play for survival today

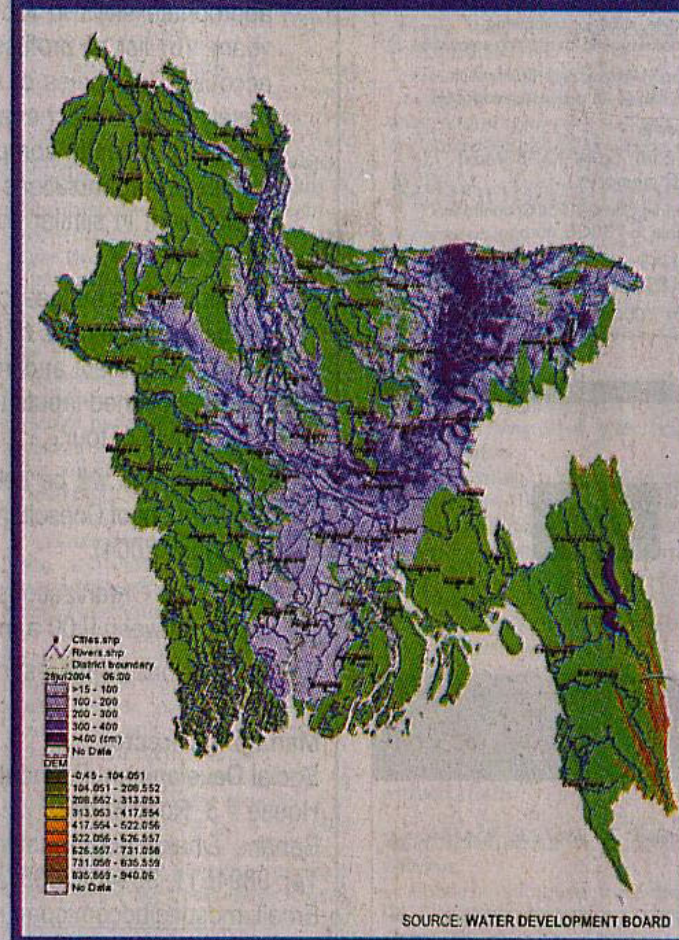
AL MUSABBIR SADI, from Colombo

Riding on a bonus point earned against Pakistan in Sunday's defeat, India will get their last shot at reaching the Eighth Asia Cup final when they take on hosts Sri Lanka today.

Sourav Ganguly's men are in a 'do-or-die' situation and a victory in the day-night clash at the

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FLOOD FORECAST FOR TOMORROW



SOURCE: WATER DEVELOPMENT BOARD

Five to die for Lalbagh triple murder

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday sentenced five to death in the Lalbagh triple murder case.

The convicts are Syed Obaidul Akbar, Ahmad Hossain, Mohammad Abdus Sattar, Mohammad Dulal Mia and Mohammad Nasir Uddin -- all are cousins.

The court also acquitted two others -- Syed Mohammad Ali alias Kala Chand and Mohammad Basir Mia -- as the charges brought against them were not proved.

Judge AR Masud of the Speedy Trial Tribunal-4 gave the verdict in a jam-packed courtroom for killing Shazedunnissa alias Sazed, 57, her daughter and son Sabiha Begum, 28, and Mursalin alias Swapan, 20, on November 23, 1999 in the city's Lalbagh area.

Akbar, Ahmad and Sattar were present in the court, while Dulal and Nasir were tried in absentia.

The convicts can appeal to the High Court against the verdict in 30 days, the judgement said.

Earlier, the prosecution and the defence completed their arguments and the court recorded statements of 22 prosecution witnesses.

In the case filed with Lalbagh

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12 lakh farmers marked for help

Agriculture loss now estimated at Tk 2,291cr

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Agriculture ministry yesterday decided to provide 12 lakh flood-hit farmers with seeds, saplings, fertiliser and pesticides to recover damages in the agriculture sector.

The ministry assessed that agriculture losses in 38 flood-affected districts stood at Tk 2,291 crore till

July 25 while it was Tk 1,400 crore till July 21.

A meeting chaired by Agriculture Minister MK Anwar yesterday decided to supply seeds, saplings, fertiliser and pesticides to affected farmers for maximum one bigha farmland.

The ministry will grow saplings

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