

48 out of 90 DCC wards flood-hit

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The raging flood has affected 48 out of 90 wards in Dhaka as the Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) has started its own relief programme yesterday.

The DCC programme is apparently inadequate with only Tk 25,000 for each affected ward to make makeshift toilets and bamboo overpasses for the destitute people. DCC sources said it has also allocated 250 food packages for each affected ward, which includes five-kg of rice, one-kg of lentil, one-kg of potato, one-kg of salt and a dozen of candles. The number of food packages was too small to go around as many complained they did not get any. "Some of us are staying here for the last five to ten days but we didn't get any relief from anybody. And today's (yesterday's) relief will be inadequate for us all," said Anwara Begum of Manikganj who took shelter at the stadium 12 days ago. In the Birshersha Shipahi Mustafa Stadium shelter where 750 families have taken refuge, this correspondent was told that they did not get any receipt to get relief.

Talking to The Daily Star DCC Mayor Sadeque Hossain Khoka said its true that the relief is inadequate. He added, "We have directed the ward commissioners and sought assistance from the government". He said the DCC has allocated a total of Tk 50,000 for each affected ward and half of it was given yesterday and the rest will be given after a few days.

The flood-affected people said their problems are the lack of pure drinking water, toilet facilities and food. Many told the correspondent that they did not get any packages of food or any relief in the past days. When asked, Ward Commissioner Shamsul Huda of ward no-29 said they have already given 350 fami-

lies food packages while the rest who had come on the previous day will be provided next. He said more than 10,000 people from Mugdah, Manikganj, Kamalapur, Basabo, Manda and Nondipara have taken shelter at different centres in his area including Mugdah Community Centre, Oasis Kindergarten School and in three under-construction buildings.

According to the DCC's estimation more than 1,50,000 flood-affected people took refuge in the 149 shelter centres in 48 wards yesterday. The city mayor visited some shelter centres yesterday and distributed packages of food among the people.

Manikganj

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"Distribution of relief often depends on whims of local union parishad members," he said.

Mihajudin and his six-member family are staying at a makeshift tent at Dhushar bus stoppage.

Another flood victim, Moslem, said, "I had to sell a cow only for Tk 7,000, which I could sell for Tk 12,000 at other times."

Meanwhile, making 'Kosha' (a small boat) is now a booming business in the flood-hit areas since it is the only mode of transport as road communication is snapped.

Cellphone

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"Now we're running the base stations in the flood-hit areas by transporting fuel oil by boats," the official said.

Cell phone services are doing a tremendous job by providing information from even the remotest part of the country, said an official of a Dhaka-based UN organisation.

The country's four private operators have around 3 million cell phones subscribers.

HC declares

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for its consideration.

Back in April, the ministry decided to re-tender the project on the plea that the existing tender got an offer much lower than the ministry's estimated cost.

Last year, the Water Development Board (WDB) that had floated the tender for the project selected a proposal outlining a cost of Tk 132 crore by Japanese company Ebara Corporation. A second bidder-Kanematsu of Japan-- had offered Tk 180 crore.

The project is being implemented mainly using a Japanese Debt Relief Grant Aid of \$17.99 million.

Although Ebara's financial proposal and technical qualification are considered outstanding, the water resources ministry through its inter-ministerial tender committee stopped the tender awarding saying that the WDB did not follow some tender guidelines and therefore did not ensure wider participation.

In April, the ministry sought

permission of the cabinet committee to re-tender the project. But the Cabinet Division rejected the idea.

The parliamentary standing committee on water resources ministry meanwhile protested the ministry's move and suggested the project should go to the lowest bidder and work should start immediately.

The water resources ministry then came up saying it wants to re-tender the project by using its own authority.

This prompted Ebara to file a writ petition with the High Court. Installation of new pumps under the GK Project will increase its irrigation coverage to 142,000 hectares from 100,000 hectares now. This will raise rice production by 286,650 tonnes.

The GK Project was set up in the sixties by installing three pumps to increase crop production in the south-western region. During 1981-93, this project was rehabilitated in two phases under Asian Development Bank loan, but the original pumps were not replaced.

Living by selling

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Tk 3,000 in normal times," Asiya lamented.

As the poor flood-hit people in Kamrangirchar are selling off their domesticated animals at throw-away prices, cattle traders move around villages of Sultanganj union to take the advantage.

Rafiq bought two cows yesterday when this correspondent talked to him.

"I will sell them at high prices," Rafiq said. "I am here because I came to know that people are selling cattle. I can get each of them cheaper by anything from Tk 2,000 to Tk 3,000."

The flood crept into the villages of Hujurpara, Sirajganj, Mansurbag, Mominbag, Pashchim Nabinagar and adjacent areas under the Sultanganj union on Saturday night. The sleeping villagers woke up to find their beds soaked by the floodwaters that rose suddenly overnight.

"We could not even save our valuables because we did not anticipate such a sudden flooding," Lajjatunnessa of Hujurpara village said. "We shifted whatever we could. But we had to leave most of our belongings back home."

Another flood victim Shefali said, "I woke up to see my 18-month-old son crying as he fell from the bed into floodwaters already on the floor."

Sakhina Khatun of Hujurpara village lost one of her eight cows in the flood Saturday night. She is trying to save the remaining seven.

Dhaka gets

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map sheets at 1:5,000 scale are being prepared covering 581 square kilometres area," he said.

The seminar, however, was told that erasing defence locations from the film-based aerial photographs might end up highlighting them.

Tk 23 crore has been allocated for the project and the Japanese government has donated Tk 21.5 crore of the amount.

"There is no clear vision of the present flood situation in Bangladesh except for the newspaper photographs and television news," said Raquib Ahmed, professor of geography and environmental studies at Rajshahi University.

He described the computerised GIS system and its components such as data editing, storing and retrieving, error propagation, file compatibility, software and hardware and open domain source. He said topographic maps can be used for strategic planning, management control and operational methods.

Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) can use the maps for tax assessment and collection, garbage and waste collection, maintenance of disposal system and controlling encroachment.

The police department can use them for crime record maintenance. Tourism department, different intelligence departments such as National Security Intelligence, Directorate General of Forces Intelligence and Criminal Investigation Department, Fire Brigade and Civil Defence, Bangladesh Road Transport Corporation (BRTC) and Dhaka Electric Supply Authority can all benefit from these maps.

Japanese GIS experts Kazumi Suwabe and Shigeru Ono also presented two technical papers elaborating on the development of the thematic mapping system.

The printed maps are expected to be available for public use in the beginning of next year and can be accessed at www.iscgm.org/index.htm in the next two months.

PM monitors

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flood victims and was capable of controlling flood situation by all possible means.

The prime minister will visit the flood-affected areas of Sunamganj and Habiganj, two northeastern frontier districts, today. On Saturday, she visited flood-hit areas of Sirajganj and Bogra.

Prime Minister's Principal Secretary Kamal Siddiqui is keeping contact with all the deputy commissioners (DCs) over telephone regarding the flood exigencies.

The principal secretary, on behalf of Prime Minister Khaleda Zia, is conveying instructions, guidelines and advice to the district administrations to deal with the flood situation with sincerity.

The deputy commissioners have been asked to carry on the flood monitoring and relief operation as well as adopt future action plan to tackle post-flood situation.

Instructions have been given to the district administrations to be careful so that no irregularities occur in relief operation.

The DCs have been asked to contact the prime minister's principal secretary directly anytime under any emergency, for any decision and step.

Diarrhoea

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concentration rises with the fall in water level," he said.

According to sources, thousands of people, mostly children who are susceptible to the waterborne disease caused by *ecoli* bacteria, are falling sick every day in absence of safe drinking water.

"People are forced to drink contaminated water for survival. Many people who live in the remote areas neither have fuel to boil water nor have they any access to water purification tablets," said a civil surgeon in Rajshahi.

"The reality is that people have to come to the temporary medical camps for treatment but many diarrhoea-affected patients are unable to come because there is hardly any transport in the flood-affected areas."

In Sylhet district, many affected people in the remote Haor areas have no access to medical treatment. Diarrhoea patients are thronging hospitals and upazila health complexes.

The health directorate claims to have sufficient quantities of oral and intravenous saline, but many places have been plagued by a crisis of saline.

The health directorate yesterday deputed officials to 36 flood-affected districts to especially monitor public health situation in the affected areas and advise the directorate on handling the situation in case of a crisis.

The Unicef and the World Health Organisation (WHO) offices in Dhaka meanwhile have donated 20 lakh water purification tablets for distribution among the flood victims.

The health directorate has requested an additional 10 crore tablets from the UN agencies for immediate supply.

The Institute of Public Health (IPH) in Mohakhali has been ordered to double its intravenous saline production from 14,000 a day to 32,000. Similarly, oral saline production has also been doubled from 200,000 packets a day.

World responds

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the effective systems rapidly mobilised by government, to reduce the impact of the floods on those affected," read the announcement from the British High Commission yesterday.

The resident mission of the Asian Development Bank (ADB) meanwhile has formed a unit to closely monitor the flood situation in consultation with government agencies and key development partners active in Bangladesh and enhance ADB's readiness to react to any urgent disaster rehabilitation needs that may arise. The ADB provided substantial assistance to Bangladesh during previous major floods.

A three-member UN team led by Larry Maramis, acting resident coordinator in Bangladesh, yesterday met Food and Disaster Management Minister Chowdhury Kamal Ibne Yusuf to know if the government has any objection to an international appeal by the United Nations.

"We have no objection to allow UN to make such an appeal to the international community," Kamal told journalists after the meeting.

He said the government would also welcome if any international organisation wants to conduct relief and rehabilitation work for the flood victims.

But he wanted to see the draft of UN appeal before it is circulated across the globe. The delegation will prepare the draft and submit it to the minister today, sources said.

"It would take at least ten days to finally make such an appeal worldwide by the United Nations because such proposals should have to be endorsed by all UN bodies," said

Dilruba Haider, assistant resident representative of the United Nations Development Programme in Bangladesh and a member of the delegation.

The government has stuck to its previous decision not to appeal for international help to cope with floods but planned to form a joint committee with top development partners for assessing the flood damage and seeking sector-wise post-flood rehabilitation loans from multi-lateral donors.

Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman already proposed this to ADB yesterday and will approach the other top donors.

"We will seek the help of multi-lateral donors for the post-flood rehabilitation programme. We will try not to take help from bilateral donors because they talk too much and offer little help," Saifur told the press at the Planning Ministry after his meeting with visiting ADB board of directors. The five-member ADB team, headed by Yusuf Anwar, will stay in Dhaka till July 29 and visit ADB projects.

"We will not seek foreign aid this time for relief. We will try to handle the relief requirements with our own resources," Saifur added.

UNDP representative Dilruba also termed the government's no-appeal stance 'quite respectable' and felt the situation was not yet to be declared as state of emergency.

However, the British assistance will be channelled through the World Food Programme (WFP) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). The WFP will coordinate the funds for food assistance and the UNDP for non-food assistance.

Floodwaters eddy

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burst their banks. Beacons and other signals needed for safe navigation on river routes went out of order or were washed away.

Boats replaced rickshaws and other vehicles in parts of Dhaka where filthy waters gushing from the collapsed sewerage system merged with floodwaters and inundated more streets and houses, blighting the normal life in the city of over 13 million.

Official news agency BSS reports: The floods hit 51 of Dhaka City Corporation's 90 wards, including Motijheel business hub and Gulshan and Banani forcing 2,52,000 people to take refuge in 206 DCC makeshift shelters.

The flood warning center reported a further rise of 4 cm in the Buriganga that was flowing 62 cm above the danger level. The Turag that recorded a rise of 11 cm was flowing 128 cm above the danger level.

Reuters said the floods in Bangladesh, eastern India and Nepal have washed away tens of thousands of houses, cut road and rail links, damaged crops and shut hundreds of factories.

The train service on Sylhet-Dhaka and Dhaka-Chittagong routes run the risk of collapse as railroads at many points went under water. The trains in operation are running at least two hours behind schedule.

But Divisional Transportation Officer Belal Uddin of Bangladesh Railway said no more rail links would snap in the coming days, if the situation remains stable.

MEMORY COMES BACK
This year's floods evoke the memories of the 1988 devastating deluge that killed about 3,500 people.

Our Jahangirnagar University correspondent said raging floodwaters are gushing through several points on Dhaka-Ashulia Highway, submerging fresh areas in Ashulia and Savar.

The road link with the capital on Dhaka-Ashulia route runs the risk of collapse as the Turag river continued to swell yesterday. The Bangshi river is swelling 70cm above the danger level at Bangladesh Export Processing Zone Area.

About 70 percent of mills and factories in Savar municipality went 4 to 5 feet under water and most villages near Amin Bazar have remained up to 10 feet under water.

Nasrin, 8, Shahin, 6, Shihab, 11, and two other unidentified school boys drowned in floodwaters in the last two days in Savar, raising the death toll to nine.

Wet tin roof

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under water," said Sajol, a local. "We do not have any supply of contamination-free water from outsiders, we are mixing alum with water and drinking it for last couple of days," he added.

Some flood-hit people moved to the city while some are living on machha (platform on stilts), having sent their children to nearby villages.

"I have sent my kids to nearby Owajpur village and am living with my husband to guard the valuables," said Achhia, pumping out water from the only tubewell that has survived the deluge, so far.

Waterborne diseases are yet to spread in the village though most people are forced to go to the toilet in the open. Both the primary and high schools of Bachhila remained close since the floodwaters started pouring in and have been turned into shelter camps.

Abducted Ctg businessman rescued

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Police yesterday rescued a businessman and a woman, who was used as bait, from the grip of abductors from Demsa village in Satkania upazila.

A special contingent of Chittagong Metropolitan Police led by Deputy Commissioner (North) Abdullah Baki carried out a 16-hour-long pre-dawn raid in the village, 30km off the city, police sources said.

The team cordoned off a house at 7:00am yesterday and rescued Giasuddin Dildar, 47, and Putul Akhter, 21, representative of an insurance company, but could not nab any of the abductors.

The sources said Dildar was trapped in the hideout as his rivals called him out of his house using the woman on Saturday following a financial dispute. The criminals also demanded a ransom of Tk 10 lakh for Dildar's release over cell phone, police said.

Police picked up two residents of the house -- Alauddin and Kamal Nahar -- for questioning.

US war brought terrorism to Iraq Says UN envoy

AFP, Vienna

The US-led invasion brought terrorism to Iraq and caused more problems than it solved, UN envoy Lakhdar Brahimi said in an interview published yesterday by the Austrian daily Salzburger Nachrichten.

He also said he believed that Iraq could become a normal country that but the interim government faced a challenge in proving that it was not "a puppet of the Americans, which is difficult to do when there are 150,000 foreign soldiers in the country."

Brahimi, who was visiting Austria at the invitation of Foreign Minister Benita Ferrero-Waldner, said "the war in Iraq was useless, it caused more problems than it solved, and it brought in terrorism."

India play

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Premadasa Stadium will help them ensure a berth in the August 1 final against the home side.

ESPN and STAR Sports will telecast the game starting at 2:45pm. Sri Lanka lead the four-team table with 12 points while India and defending champions Pakistan, both with one match in hand, trail on seven and five points respectively.

There are five points for a win and one bonus point in a match, which can even go to a losing side.

India skipper Sourav Ganguly, who admitted that his team was concentrating on the bonus point rather than a win in Sunday's mega-clash against Pakistan, said they had no option but to field five specialist bowlers again.

India looked to be a batsman short when chasing 301 for victory against arch-rivals Pakistan. They will once again miss the services of injured VVS Laxman.

The Indian board has decided not to fly out a replacement for the classy batsman, which means Laxman still is in the squad.

"This is nothing new for us. We've been in similarly tight situations before but managed to overcome them. We will go out there to win," the Indian captain told reporters after practice yesterday.

India are expected to include pace spearhead Zaheer Khan in place of a wayward Laxmipati Balaji or Ashish Nehra.

On the other hand, Sri Lanka, who edged India by 12 runs in their first-phase meeting at Dambulla, will be looking to maintain their unbeaten run in the tournament. But they will be without ace off-spinner Muttiah Muralitharan who has gone to Kandy to mourn the death of his grandfather.

12 lakh farmers

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on 2200 acres of land for distribution among the farmers.

The Agriculture Extension Department will prepare a list of 12 lakh affected small farmers who will have the benefits of the rehabilitation project.

Out of 1.17 crore farmer families throughout the country, 37 lakh have been badly hit by floods. Some are big farmers who do not need government help. There are also a good number of landless farmers, who do not need farming aid, but need livelihood aid. The government will help the landless farmers with relief and rehabilitation aids.

MK Anwar emerging out of the meeting told the press, "We may not be able to compensate for all the damage that flooding has inflicted on the farming community. We hope our farmers who are courageous and face such natural calamities every year, will try their best to overcome this year's problems with the same spirit."

The latest assessment by the ministry described jute as the worst affected crop incurring a loss of Tk 951 crore. Damage to aus rice was estimated at Tk 432 crore, sown aman at Tk 377 crore, transplant aman at Tk 74 crore, vegetables at Tk 121 crore and others Tk 310 crore.

NGOs seek cheap

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attended the meeting held at the Press Information Department.

The NGOs also said as the flood situation was worsening day by day, the government should go for an international appeal for help. The government side assured them of considering the matter.

The NGO representatives said lack of transport facilities hinders their relief activities in remote areas. They urged the government to provide speedboats, other modes of transport and also helicopters to carry relief goods and godown facilities to keep the goods.

They also sought flour at a cheaper price from government stock for making and distributing bread among the flood-hit people.

The state minister urged them to conduct relief activities in a coordinated manner.

Kamal Ibne Yusuf said the government alone cannot tackle

Proshika chief

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May 22. The government filed 20 cases including one for sedition against him and he was refused bail several times in the cases.

Faruque, however, received bail in the 20 cases, the last on Sunday, from the High Court.

"I feel better now to meet my family and colleagues after over two months," Faruque told The Daily Star after his release.

Terming the cases false and a design to harass him, Faruque said, "Filing 17 cases including one for sedition in the same day clearly shows their apparent intention to harass me and my organisation."

Asked whether he will challenge the cases, he said, "We'll take initiative to that end after my lawyers Dr. Kamal Hossain and Barrister Rakanuddin Mahmud return from abroad."

"In fact, I'm anxious over the government move against my organisation and over logging of a huge fund," he said.

When asked about his next move, Faruque said he will shortly begin relief and rescue work among the flood-affected people.

"My organisation works every year for flood-hit people, but this year, it has become impossible due to my confinement and the funding," he said.

In response to a query about his opinion on further harassment, he said the government may file more cases against him. "But I hope wisdom will dawn on the government."

Top Iraq official

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from the blast.

In the main southern city of Basra, two women working at the British-operated airport were shot dead, the latest in a string of attacks on Iraqis working with the foreign troops still stationed across the country.

"Two women were killed and two others wounded when their minibus was attacked in the Mishraq district," a medic at the Sadr teaching hospital said.

Meanwhile, a senior Iraqi police officer at the interior ministry, Colonel Mussab al-Awadi, was shot dead in a Baghdad restaurant Monday, a spokesman said.

"Colonel Mussab al-Awadi was shot in the early afternoon by unknown (gunmen) who opened fire in the al-Baya area in western Baghdad," said the spokesman, refusing to give his name.

The death of Awadi, who had coordinated security arrangements with tribal elders, was the latest in a string of killings of senior civil servants since Iraq's caretaker government was appointed on June 1.

Earlier, a car bomb exploded in Baghdad and at least two mortar rounds were fired at the education

such a massive disaster in the country. He advised the NGOs to communicate with their foreign donors for providing assistance to the flood victims.

The minister lauded the role the NGOs had played in times of calamities.

Later, he told journalists the government was ready to help the NGOs in their relief operation.

The minister also said, if needed, helicopter and speedboats would be provided to them. He asked the NGOs to be in touch with district and upazila level government officials for coordinated relief activities.

The meeting was told the government had already distributed around 30,000 tonnes of rice, about Tk 3 crore and 4,000 bundles of tin sheets among the flood affected people in 50 districts.

On food supply at reasonable price, the minister said the government had already taken initiative to float international tender for additional food procurement.

Director General of NGO Affairs Bureau Mizanur Rahman was present at the meeting.

Hasina meets Monmohan

UNB, Dhaka

Opposition leader Sheikh Hasina yesterday met Indian Prime Minister Monmohan Singh in New Delhi and discussed relations between the two next-door neighbours as well as regional developments.

The meeting between Hasina and Singh lasted 30 minutes from 4:15 PM (IST).

Indian National Security Advisor JN Dixit, Foreign Secretary Shashank, Hasina's younger sister Sheikh Rehana and Bangladesh lawmaker Kazi Zafarullah were present at the meeting at the official residence of the Indian prime minister.

Singh and Hasina had one-to-one discussions before they took their aides in, Hasina's Press Secretary Abul Kalam Azad told the UNB. But Azad could not say about the topic of the exclusive talks between the two leaders.

Hasina is on a four-day visit to India during which she is likely to meet a host of other Indian leaders, including former premier Atal Behari Vajpayee.

Indian External Affairs Minister Natwar Singh hosted a dinner in honour of Hasina. Indian political leaders, bureaucrats and intelligence attended the dinner.

4 killed

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Mohammadpur after killing him somewhere else.

At Shahjadpur in Badda, five local youths including Kabir and Bablu called out Saiful Islam Channa, 23, at around 7:15pm when he was gossiping with his friend in his shop.

The gang shot him in the head following a heated debate.

Doctors at the DMCH declared him dead on arrival