

# 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 Maniknagar who took shelter at the stadium 12 days ago. In the Birshester Shishiphi 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 Mughdah, Maniknagar, Kamalapur, Basabo, Manda and Nondipara have taken shelter at different centres in his area including Mughdah 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.

Mujahidin and his six-member family are staying at a makeshift tent at Dushnir 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 phone 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, Sirajnagar, 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 values because we did not anticipate such a sudden flooding," Lajatunnesa 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.

"But if I cannot arrange fodder, I may have to sell them," she said.

Many of the villagers have flocked to the capital for shelter. Others gathered on the inundated Sirajnagar road and trying to find a dry place. A member of Gram Sarkar, Sirajul Islam, arranged their shelter at Al-Hera Community Centre.

The centre is now sheltering over 1,500 flood victims.

"I met with the Gram Sarkar chief Nazimuddin Nazu Sunday. He said ministers and parliamentarians will visit our place today (Monday) and then we will come to know what kind of relief we will get."

As the situation looks grim, the flood victims are taking doses in the form of rice, pulses and other essentials from the better-off locals and preparing Khichuri.

"For the last three days, I am living on puffed rice and biscuit. But we are facing an acute drinking water crisis and sanitation problem," said Shahinor, another victim at the community centre.

The poor working women of Sirajnagar are unable to go to their work. This has already affected the local garment factories. Shamim, production manager of Teen Sweater Limited, said, "Of our 750 workers, only 350 turned up yesterday. So, our production 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.

## Dhaka gets

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map sheets at 1:5,000 scale are being prepared covering 581 square kilo metres 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 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 (BRITC) 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 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](http://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 areas have no access to medical treatment. Diarrhoea-affected patients are unable to come because there is hardly any transport in the flood-affected areas.

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.

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 Bachihalli remained close since the floodwaters started pouring in and have been turned into shelter camps.

## 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.

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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 finalise such an appeal worldwide by the United Nations because such proposals should have to be endorsed by all UN bodies," said

## Abducted Ctg businessman rescued

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, CtG

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 multilateral 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.

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He also said he believed that Iraq could become a normal country that 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 100,000 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."

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In fact, I'm anxious over the

government move against my organisation and over logging of a huge fund," he said.

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."