

Rain threat ups flood worry

Death toll now 400; water from centre won't recede in a week; significant recession of water in north

NEWS DESK

Further monsoon rains expected today threaten to worsen the floods that inundated vast swathes of land pushing the official death toll to about 400 since July 10, Flood Forecasting and Warning Centre officials said yesterday.

Floodwaters that have submerged two-thirds of Bangladesh leaving 30 million people cut off or homeless will not recede from the centre for at least a week, AFP quoted experts as warning.

Executive Engineer Selim Bhuiyan of the flood warning centre told The Daily Star that floods would worsen in the event of rains in Bangladesh or India, piling more pressure on the central districts.

Light to moderate rain or thundershower accompanied by temporary gusty wind is likely in a few places until 6:00pm today, the meteorological department said in a weathercast.

Selim Bhuiyan said the floodwaters receded significantly from the north and northeast but have swelled by 9 to 18 cm a day over the last few days in Dhaka, where yesterday's rise was recorded at 3 cm in appurtenance.

A high tide in the Bay of Bengal would prevent water dispersing because the sea level is expected to remain slightly higher until the full moon on August 2, the experts told AFP.

Meantime, water dispersing from northern areas would continue to gush downstream resulting in worsening flooding in central Bangladesh.

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Hungry people scramble for food as members of a carpenters' organisation distribute relief among flood victims near the Bangladesh Television Bhaban in Rampura yesterday.

PHOTO: SK ENAMUL HAQ

RELIEF DISTRIBUTION

Opposition MPs tell of political foul play

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Opposition party lawmakers from the flood-hit areas accused the government of political foul play in distributing 'insufficient' relief among the victims.

The relief is highly inadequate, and ministers and alliance leaders are compelling local administrations to allocate more goods and money to their constituencies, depriving people of rival lawmakers' areas, they alleged.

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Deputy Minister for Food and Disaster Management Asadul Habib Dulu, however, refuted the allegations claiming that his office allocates relief on the basis of flood vulnerability and demand notes from district administrations.

"I myself wrote to Prime Minister Khaleda Zia for urgent relief and rescue work. But the government has not yet responded to my appeal," said Deputy Leader of the Opposition Abdul Hamid, elected from the Kishoreganj-5 constituency of the Jatiya Sangsad.

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But opposition MPs and leaders told The Daily Star of the government's partisan attitude in the relief allocation.

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