

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 thundershowers 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 apparent stability.

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. SEE PAGE 11 COL 4



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

Army deployed to save DND dam

1 million people under threat to become marooned

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Authorities yesterday deployed army to save Dhaka-Narayanganj-Demra (DND) dam that has become vulnerable to rushing floodwaters, threatening to maroon more than one million people.

Deputy Commissioner of Narayanganj Harun Ur Rashid asked the government yesterday to deploy army at the dam and also at Dhaka Narsingdi Dam Project (DNDP).

"Both dams are now vulnerable due to the continuous pressure of water and people inside the dams are in panic. Water is gushing in through many points of the dams and the government deployed army to save them," Harun said.

The Roads and Highways Department has been putting sandbags along the embankment from Dallah to Kajla, stretching more

than three kilometres, as the water level has almost reached the top of the DND dam.

Textile, paper, re-rolling, garment and steel mills outside the DND dam have gone under water.

Affected people of the eastern areas on the outskirts of the city including Manda, Dharmikpara, Mallikpara, Shukna Tengra, Mendipur, Amulia and Sharulia have taken refuge in several schools inside the DND embankment.

People are throwing up makeshift houses beside the dam and herding their cattle in them, as the water is rising every day.

Officials at the Flood Forecasting and Warning Centre said more areas in the capital risk inundation as water from the northern part, the worst flood-hit area, is rushing towards the central part.

About a third of Dhaka City is

under water as the country's most severe floods in recent memory took a turn for the worse. Many streets are under waist-deep water where boats have replaced rickshaws as the primary mode of transport.

Thousands of families from the capital and areas on its fringe crammed into overcrowded temporary flood shelters where authorities are distributing limited supplies of food and drinking water.

Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) yesterday estimated some two lakh displaced people have taken refuge in 209 shelter centres in its 55 affected wards out of the 90 and thousands more were expected to join them.

Volunteers have been distributing cooked food and drinking water in the shelters but supplies were inadequate, according to the flood victims. SEE PAGE 11 COL 6

Damage assessment first before int'l appeal for aid: PM

UNB, Habiganj

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia yesterday said the government was assessing the post-flood rehabilitation work before making any international appeal for foreign assistance.

"We are distributing adequate emergency relief and estimating the need for rehabilitation," she said, responding to a query whether the government is going to seek international assistance for flood relief and rehabilitation work.

The prime minister told the accompanying journalists during her visit to flood affected Sunamganj and Habiganj districts that seeking foreign aid without proper assessment would not be beneficial.

Earlier, addressing the flood victims who have taken refuge at Habiganj Boys High School, she urged all, including the opposition political parties, NGOs and the affluent people to come forward in mitigating the sufferings of the millions.

"This is the time to stand by the affected people. They will remember it," Khaleda said pointing at the opposition political parties.

The prime minister assured the flood-hit people of house building loans and increased distribution of vulnerable group feeding (VGF)

cards.

"We've to rebuild roads, embankments and other infrastructures," she said hinting at the employment opportunities ahead as part of the post-flood rehabilitation programme.

Deputy Commissioner of Habiganj briefed the prime minister about the flood situation in the district when her helicopter had to land on the road near Shutang Bridge finding no other suitable ground. The flood has engulfed all the eight upazilas of the district.

The prime minister first visited Sunamganj, which experienced its worst flood in recent times. Elderly people of the small district town said they had seen the severe flooding in 1974, 1988 and 1998, but this time it was worse than ever.

She addressed a gathering of flood-hit people at Jubilee School and later distributed relief materials among them. She also distributed relief among the affected people sheltered at the Collectorate Building and the Judge's Court premises in the town.

The prime minister, while addressing the district officials at Sunamganj Circuit House, warned that no irregularities in relief and rehabilitation work would be tolerated.

SEE PAGE 11 COL 5

Flood losses may go up to Tk 40,000cr

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The losses caused by the current floods in the country would be between Tk 30,000 crore and Tk 40,000 crore, according to a preliminary estimate by the government.

Giving this figure, Food and Disaster Management Minister Chowdhury Kamal Ibne Yusuf yesterday told newsmen, "The government alone cannot recover such massive losses, so we need assistance from others."

Asked why the government is not making any appeal for help from the international community, the minister said, "It is not wise to extend a beggar's hand to the world community on every occasion. Time has come when we should maintain our dignity as a nation."

He went on, "We may be poor but we should not be beggar."

The minister mentioned the United Nations would make a worldwide appeal for urgent assistance for the flood victims of Bangladesh. The UN's local office will soon show him the draft of the appeal and he will forward it to the prime minister for her approval.

Kamal mentioned the raging floods have washed away thousands of houses and other property and damaged totally or partially hundreds of kilometres of roads and highways and a large number of bridges and culverts.

The government has already SEE PAGE 11 COL 1

Morshed differs with Manmohan on 'separatists' presence'

UNB, Dhaka

Foreign Minister M Morshed Khan yesterday disagreed with Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's reported concern about the presence of separatist and militant groups that were operating from Bangladesh.

Singh expressed the concern during a meeting with opposition leader Sheikh Hasina in New Delhi on Monday.

"We don't recognise this view...We don't allow any terrorist group or individual to operate against any country by using SEE PAGE 11 COL 6

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.

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.

"Our relief allocations did not discriminate against (constituencies of) opposition parties. There is also no scope for interference by ministers in charge of districts and leaders of ruling parties as the relief work is being operated by public administra-

tions," the deputy minister said. But opposition MPs and leaders told The Daily Star of the government's partisan attitude in the relief allocation.

"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. SEE PAGE 11 COL 1

Hasina meets Sonia

UNB, Dhaka

Opposition leader and Awami League (AL) President Sheikh Hasina yesterday met Congress President and Chairman of the ruling National Progressive Alliance Sonia Gandhi and other senior political leaders on the second day of her four-day private visit to India.

She met Sonia at her Janapath Street residence at 5:00pm (IST) and discussed bilateral issues aiming to strengthen relations between the two neighbours. The meeting lasted over an hour, said Hasina's Press Secretary Abul Kalam Azad in Dhaka.

The opposition leader also met Indian Defence Minister Pranab Mukherjee, former Indian prime SEE PAGE 11 COL 3

Tannery waste poses health threat to flood-hit people

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

While raging floods have swamped more than one-third of the capital, a vast area inside Dhaka flood protection embankment is also reeling under stagnant rainwater contaminated with huge quantities of liquid waste from tannery industries at Hazaribagh, exposing thousands to serious health hazards.

Water-logging in the area has taken a serious turn submerging low-lying parts of a number of localities, causing unbearable miseries to low-income people living in shanties and other low-cost houses.

The worst-affected areas are Hazaribagh, Nawabganj, Imamganj, Swarighat and part of

Mohammadpur

Local people and tannery owners have set up at least 10 pumps to pump out polluted water to the other side of the embankment which is under floodwaters. The Buriganga and Turag flow by these areas.

But this has posed a health hazard to about 20 lakh people living in Kamrangirchar, Jaulabati, Rasulpur, Munshihat, Basila, Hasan Nagar, Matbar Bazar, Khola Mura, Jhauchar, Tekerhat, Sultanganj and the adjacent areas.

Medical teams working in the areas on both sides of the embankment said cases of diarrhoea, dysentery, scabies, fever, headache and SEE PAGE 11 COL 6

6-yr-old boy injured in bomb blast

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A 6-year-old boy was severely wounded in a bomb explosion in the capital's Sabujbagh area yesterday.

Mohammad Raju, 6, son of Nazim Uddin of Sarkerpara, Mothertek, found an abandoned container on Goran Road at about 7:00am when he was playing in front of his grandfather's house, sources said.

The bomb went off a few minutes after he started to toy with it. Raju was rushed to Dhaka Medical College Hospital at around 8:30am with splinters in his head and thigh, they added.

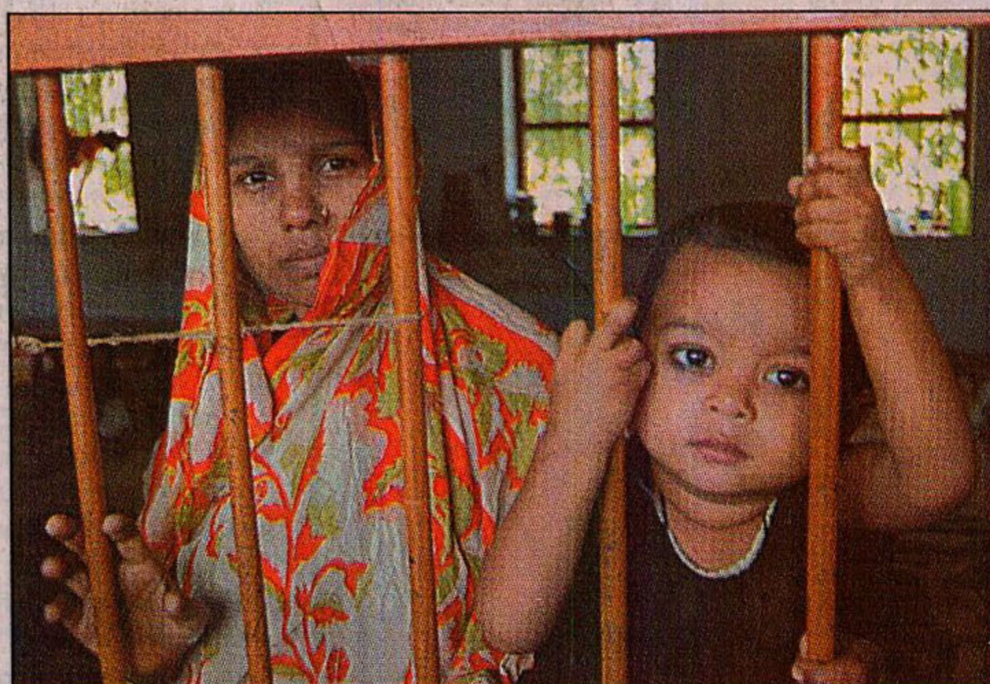
"Finding a tape-coated can, I started to play with it and it blasted with a bang after a couple of minutes," Raju said.

Relatives said the explosion almost severed his right hand at the wrist and blown away some of his fingers.

WFP to provide food assistance to flood victims

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The World Food Programme (WFP), a United Nations (UN) body, has committed to carry out a massive food assistance programme for the flood affected people in Bangladesh with 1.20 lakh metric tonnes of SEE PAGE 11 COL 7



Kohinur Begum and her son have been waiting at Goran Ali Ahmed High School for relief since they took refuge in the makeshift flood shelter abandoning their home as floods swamped low-lying areas in and around Dhaka.

PHOTO: SYED ZAKIR HOSSAIN

Living without relief

JULFIKAR ALI MANIK

Nearly 4,000 flood-hit people keep their fingers crossed that the promised food and medical relief from the government would arrive them at the relief shelters in Goran, east of the capital, before they fall sick with hunger.

Even local ruling BNP leaders

managing the relief shelters speak in a tone of frustration and shame at the absence of necessary government relief in Goran.

"Local lawmaker and Works Minister Mirza Abbas is due to visit here on Thursday. We hope the relief will come following his visit," said a local BNP activist at Goran Adarsha Girls High School in East Goran, now turned into a

relief centre.

More than 1,200 flood-hit people who have taken shelter in Goran relief centres since July 23 complain that they are yet to receive any food or medical relief.

"We came here in the hope of getting relief, which we have not received yet," said Mamta Begum, 60, who came to the SEE PAGE 11 COL 4

Sri Lanka chase India's 271

AFP, Colombo

Virender Sehwag and Sourav Ganguly hit timely half-centuries as India posted a challenging 271-6 against Sri Lanka in a crucial Asia Cup super league match yesterday to sustain their hopes of qualifying for the final.

Skipper Ganguly survived a controversial catch to pile up 79, while Sehwag thrived on two dropped chances to score 81 in the day-night match India had to win to pip Pakistan for a place in the final.

Sri Lanka are already in the final with 12 points from two matches, followed by India (7/2) and Pakistan (5/2).

Yuvraj Singh then scored a brisk 46-ball 50 as India gathered 68 runs in the closing 10 overs to set a stiff

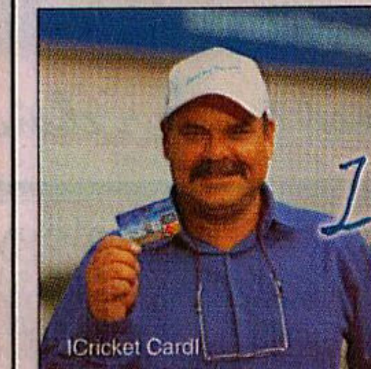
target for the hosts.

Ganguly and Sehwag had set the stage as they made the most of an under-strength Sri Lankan attack to put on 134 for the second wicket after the dismissal of star batsman Sachin Tendulkar (18) in early overs.

Sehwag returned to form after failing to score a half-century in his last eight one-dayers, but not before being let off by Mahela Jayawardene in the slips and then by Avishka Gunawardene in the covers.

The hard-hitting opener, however, failed to curb his strokes as he struck two sixes and six fours in his 92-ball knock.

Ganguly, who handed rival captain Marvan Atapattu a team-list of only 10 players by mistake before the toss, survived a confident leg-before SEE PAGE 11 COL 5



Standard Chartered
I Believe
my credit card carries my cricket passion
Call: 9565153-4 (Dhaka)
714896 (Chittagong)

GrameenPhone
From your GP Mobile write **CRIC** and send* SMS to **2777**
In return SMS you will receive the latest cricket related information