

# When footpaths turn homes

CITY CORRESPONDENT

Raging floodwaters have driven Ambia Khatun, 46, from her Kathalbagan slum last week to the footpaths of Panthapath.

She now lives under a makeshift canopy of bamboo and plastic sheet with her five-member family without any relief.

Like Ambia, some 40 more families have squatted down on the Panthapath footpath, just opposite the plush and towering Basundhara City shopping mall. Another 20 families have made canopies on the western side of the park opposite to Sonargaon Hotel.

"We have no other place to go. We left all our assets on the rooftop of our abandoned home. Inside, it is just chest-deep water," said Ambia while cooking food on the walkway. Her husband Abul Kashem, a vegetable trader, is busy tying up the loose ends of the can-

opy they now call 'home'.

"Every night, we visit our home just to be sure our belongings have not been stolen yet," said Kashem with a blank look.

Ambia's story is repeated for many at the Kathalbagan Free School Street slum, who have moved to higher ground from the submerged low-lying areas. Around 3,000 shanties, home to more than 15,000 people, have been inundated there. Most slum dwellers are still staying in the area while some have already moved to parks and pavements.

Salma Akhter, 28, set up a shelter at a cost of Tk 500 to live with her rickshaw-puller husband and 5-year-old daughter Lucky.

Salma said they have left their shanty locked before moving to the road three days ago.

"Our days now start with a hope that the water will go down and we will go back to our home. Unfortunately, we

see more water coming with filth and reek. It is impossible to live," Salma said.

Some said a city corporation officer visited them and asked why they had encroached on the roads.

"When we told our woes to him the man left the place without saying anything. We do not know how long we can stay on the road. If we are evicted we have no where to go," said Rafiq, Salma's husband.

Some slum dwellers have moved to the park with their cattle. At least 40 cows now stand under the open sky. Mohammad Moslem, 42, a cattle trader and milkman, said, "We cannot sleep at night because we have to guard the cattle against thieves."

Rumana Begum, who owns two cows, alleged that police demand illegal toll money from them.

"I have three cows and lost one. I do not know how I will manage the others. If they do

not survive, my life will be broken," said Rumana with tears in her eyes.

She cannot find fodder for the cattle. "Last one week, I managed some wheat, grass and rice. But now, it has become very difficult for me to arrange these," she said.

A dairy hit by the flood has also occupied Panthapath footpath with around 100 cows, 20 sheep and 10 chickens. One cow died a few days ago and many others are down with diseases.

Twelve to 16 guards protect the cattle from thieves.

One of the caretakers said a Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) official visited the place and asked them to keep it clean.

A high DCC official requesting anonymity said, "We are aware of the situation but it will be inhuman to evict them now since it will increase miseries of the flood victims. Once the floodwaters go down, we will think about it."



STAR PHOTO

Makeshift canopies on the Panthapath footpath.

## Floods bond them together

They are all flood victims. Garment workers, beggars, home helps and rickshawpullers are staying together in the same place. It is hard to believe most of them are unknown to each other

SULTANA RAHMAN

Rickshawpuller Hemayet, his wife and their 13-day-old daughter took refuge on the rooftop of an under-construction building at Natun Bazar in Kamrangirchar, as his shanty went under floodwater.

But Hemayet went missing four days ago. His wife Shahida does not have money to buy food for the newborn nor could she breastfeed the baby girl enough.

Other flood-hit people who have

also taken shelter on the same roof are sharing their food with Shahida and one of them went looking for Hemayet.

"We are trying to arrange powder milk for the baby. We are giving Shahida money to buy milk. But that's not enough," said Firoz, a roadside shopkeeper, whose shop is reeling underwater.

"I don't know how I can return their help. They have saved my daughter and me," Shahida said.

About 40 people have taken

shelter on the rooftop and made flimsy shelters with polythene sheeting. A third of the building's ground floor has been inundated, sending people on wary watch as the water level is rising by the day.

The flood victims have come from slums in low-lying areas in Kamrangirchar where the low-income group finds house rents affordable. It is hard to believe most of them are unknown to each other.

Floods bonded them together. Shahkawat Islam, the landlord, has left the roof of his three-storey building for the flood victims.

The man has changed too. The person who used to lock the gate to his house for security reasons round the clock and strangers had no entry has made the roof of the building a shelter for flood victims.

Shahkawat is no longer worried by insecurity and the 'strangers' are cautious not to harm his property.

"You can't imagine how careful they are. I did not know these people, but they act as my family members," he said.

The monsoon floods swamped Kamrangirchar, across the Buriganga, a week ago, leaving thousands of men, women and children homeless and without food and drinking water. But the crisis has inspired them to help each other. "We cannot help someone with money, but we can make them feel happy with whatever we have," said a dayworker Salauddin, who has taken shelter on higher ground with two other families.

All are sharing their own food. He said most of them are eating food once or twice a day and did not get relief from the government.

"I am thinking not only of my family, but two other families as well, because they are also thinking about us," Salauddin said. "The poor can understand the poor."



People take shelter on the rooftop in Kamrangir Char.

## DU students come to aid of distressed

CITY CORRESPONDENT

Dhaka University (DU) students are frantically working round the clock to find ways of mitigating the sufferings of the flood-affected people. They are shunning their classes, examinations and even meeting-processions.

Students, different social and cultural organisations and various student wings of political parties are collecting and distributing relief for the affected people.

The authorities postponed classes and examinations until August 10 because of the floods and formed a relief committee to help the victims. Chaired by acting Vice-Chancellor, Professor AFM Yusuf Haider, a meeting on the issue was held at the DU senate room on July 26.

"We want to help people in this calamity with all our logistics," said Professor Haider. "DU is going to start a massive relief activities," the acting VC added.

DU authorities initially allocated Tk 425,000 to a fund for the flood victims. Teachers, who work as administrators in different levels, donated their one-month allowance to the relief fund. DU officials and employees will follow the example of these teachers.

Socio-cultural organisations like the Dhaka University Debating Society (DUDS), Dhaka Biswabidyalay Sahitya Sangskritik Sangsod, Progoti Poribrajak Dal, Bigyan Chetona Parisad, Diashla, Bonyarta Sohajogita Kendra are involved in collecting aid for the affected.

DU relief workers are collecting money, clothes, medicine and dry

ration from students, teachers and employees. A group of general students and Teachers and Student Centre (TSC)-based recitation organisation Swarkalpon Abritt Chakra collect funds from passers-by.

Members of DUDS are selling tickets for debates and band shows on July 30 at the TSC auditorium to raise funds for the flood victims.

Ruling BNP's student wing Jayatabadi Chatra Dal (JCD) organised their activities in the DUCSU building under the supervision of its Joint Secretary Mostofa Khan Safori. JCD workers packed rice, chira, dal, medicine, saline, candle and firebox separately in bags for distribution.

"We will do our best for flood-affected people both in the city and remote areas," said Mostofa.

Main opposition Awami League's student wing Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) started relief work in the DUCSU cafeteria with the introduction of a bread and saline distribution pro-

ject.

"We gave relief to those housed at the Shahid Anwar High School flood shelter in Lalbagh on Sunday. We are continuously producing bread and balanced diets at the DUCSU cafeteria from day one. BCL activists have asked to leave the place despite obtaining prior permission from the authorities," said Saimun Parvez, coordinator of Bonyarta Sohajogita Kendra.

"Now we are moving our activities to the Institute of Education Research (IER) cafeteria on a directive by the authorities," added Saimun.

"Four students on behalf of Bonyarta Sohajogita Kendra sought permission from the coordination authorities. Many organisations too sought places for relief work. It was difficult to allocate the DUCSU cafeteria to a single organisation," said DU Proctor AK Firoz Ahmed.

"We want to all the organisations to join hands to help those affected," Firoz Ahmed added.

## useful telephone numbers

### COURIER SERVICES

<b>International</b>	Overseas Courier Service- 9352431, 8321169 Pacific Courier- 9568446 Reliance Express Service- 9558515, 7110249 Sky International service- 9660442 Skynet world Wide Express- 9558062, 9560258, 7114787, 7113184 TNT Express- 9566662, 9558239, 8618155 Union Courier Service- 9341722 United Parcel Service Air alliance Ltd- 8826429, 8810223	Dolphin Courier- 955802 Dreamland Courier Service- 9550326, 9566975 Pioneer Courier Services- 9561727, 9569759 Probashi Courier Services- 9346359 Rainbow Express Parcel Services Ltd- 8322773, 8315703 Reliance Express Services- 9558515, 7110249 Sundarban Courier Services- 9551984, 9556189, 9551656 Sunrise Courier Services- 9568751 World Runner Express Ltd. 9112068, Fax - 880-2-9112068
<b>National</b>	Asian courier Service Ltd- 8313543 BAE- 9884851 Central Courier Service- 9881118 Confidence Courier Service Ltd. 9567036 Chisty Courier- 7110177-9, Cosmopol Services- 9552793, 9557975 Dhaka Courier Services- 7236222	Geethi Institute Int'l- Dhaka- 9126525-6 Indian Information Centre & Cultural Library- 8615096 The Russian Cultural Centre- 9116314, 9118531, 9118314 Drik Photo Gallery- 9120125, 8112954, 8123412
<b>TIPS</b>	<b>Do you know according to Dhaka City Corporation, you must deposit your waste at the collection site between 4pm and 10pm</b>	

### LIBRARY & INFO-

<b>Libraries, Cultural and Information Centers</b>
Central Public Library- 8626001-4, Shishu Academy- 9564128 Shilpakala Academy- 8614673 Bangla Academy- 8619550 Islamic Foundation- 9550280, 9556407 Nazrul Institute- 9114602 Ford Foundation- 8116133 Alliance Francaise- 8611557 British Council- 8618867-8, 8618905-7 Community Development Library- 8113769, 8113604 Geethi Institute Int'l- Dhaka- 9126525-6 Indian Information Centre & Cultural Library- 8615096 The Russian Cultural Centre- 9116314, 9118531, 9118314 Drik Photo Gallery- 9120125, 8112954, 8123412

### OUTING

<b>Museum and Zoo</b>
National Museum- 8619396-9 Open: 10 am- 5 pm, Friday 3 pm- 8 pm, Thursday closed
<b>Muktijuddha Jadughar-</b>
9559091 Open: 10:30 am- 6:30 pm, Sunday Closed
<b>Bangabandhu Smiti Jadughar-</b>
8110046 Open: 10 am- 5 pm, Wednesday closed
<b>Ahsan Manzil</b>
Open: 10 am- 5 pm, Friday: 3 pm- 7 pm, Thursday Closed
<b>Shishu Jadughar-</b>
9666466 Open: 10 am- 6 pm, Sunday Closed

### CITY BUS ROUTE

<b>Bus No.</b>	<b>Route</b>
1	Gulistan-Shahbagh-Banglamotor-Farmgate-Mirpur 10, 11, 12
2	