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Heavy rain forecast rings fresh alarm

Floods in the north improve

STAR REPORT

Heavy cloudbursts and a strong pull of the full moon in the coming days threaten to worsen the deluge in the central region, water and weather experts warned yesterday, while northern districts saw a significant recession of floodwaters.

Director of the Meteorological Department Akram Hossain forecasts that heavy rains will lash Bangladesh for the next five days from tomorrow. Driving rains twinned with the rush of water from

the upstream will worsen the floods, he said.

"We are aware of this forecast. Heavy rains may come in the Ganges and Brahmaputra basins. It will take seven to eight days for the water of these basins to reach the central region," Executive Engineer Selim Bhuiyan of the Water Development Board's Flood Forecasting and Warning Centre told The Daily Star.

"If the floodwaters in the central region do not recede significantly by the time, deterioration of the flood situation is highly likely," he said.

According to Bangla calendar Loknath Panjika, high tide triggered by the full moon will prevail from Friday night to Saturday morning. But Akram Hossain says the full moon will appear on the midnight of August 2 according to the information with the Meteorological Department.

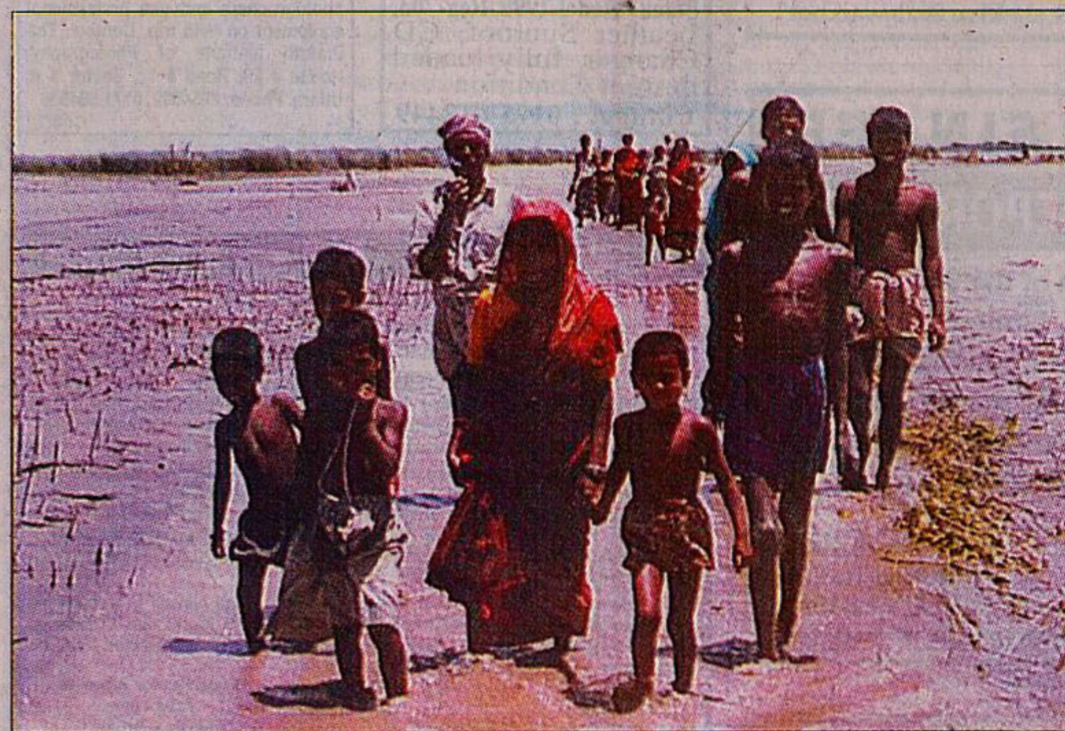
The only good news is that the water level in the Meghna river in Chandpur has marked a decrease of 10 cm on Tuesday, although it is flowing 82 cm above the danger level.

Bhuiyan noted there is a possibility that the water level in the Meghna river will fall further in 48 hours, which will improve the flood situation in the central part of the country.

"Yet the floodwaters in the capital may not retreat soon unless the water levels in the Buriganga, Shitalakha, Dhaleswari and other rivers around Dhaka go far below the danger marks," he said.

Water experts at a seminar warned that this year's floods may

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People of shoal areas of Khanchibari in Fulchhari of Gaibandha district head back home yesterday after recession of floodwaters.

Khaleda flies off to join BIMST-EC meet in Bangkok

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia flies off to Bangkok today with a strong 31-member contingent to attend the first summit of the BIMST-EC (Bangladesh, India, Myanmar, Sri Lanka, Thailand Economic Cooperation), which is likely to be renamed in the summit slated for July 30-31.

Khaleda and Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh are scheduled to meet for the first time as heads of government on the sidelines of the summit on July 31. Foreign Minister M Moshed Khan, however, said the maiden bilateral meeting between the two countries could be held on July 30. A bilateral meeting will also be held with Thai Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra on July 30 in an effort to boost the government's 'look east' policy.

The summit, put off in February due to the then Indian Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee's preoccupation with the general

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Miseries at Manikganj

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Around 10 lakh flood-hit people of Manikganj are in acute crisis of food and many of them are suffering from water-borne diseases. Inadequate relief and contaminated food and drinking water are blamed for such sufferings of people.

Floodwaters have submerged all villages on both sides of the nearly 88-kilometre-long Dhaka-Aricha highway, forcing thousands to move to flood shelters, embankments or the highway.

District Flood Control Room at Manikganj said the current spell of floods has affected about 1.75 lakh families, damaged nearly 75,000 houses, destroyed standing crops in about 1.66 acres of land and left 16 people killed.

The floods have affected 65 unions, two municipalities, around 400 kilometres of roads, 53.5 kilometres of embankment and 227 bridges in the district, it added.

Locals said floodwater receded in the last two days from the submerged stretches of the highway in Boalia and Uthuli of Shibhalaya upazila.

RELIEF
Hundreds of people at three relief distribution centres this correspondent visited yesterday complained of not receiving any relief.

At Jagir High School relief distribution centre in Manikganj municipality, some 500 people were seen anxiously waiting for more than two hours for the local lawmaker to arrive and distribute food.

The lawmaker arrived at 10:35am and scolded the local authorities and a person concerned for inadequate relief arrangement for a huge gathering. "Do you think relief comes from your father's possession?" he yelled.

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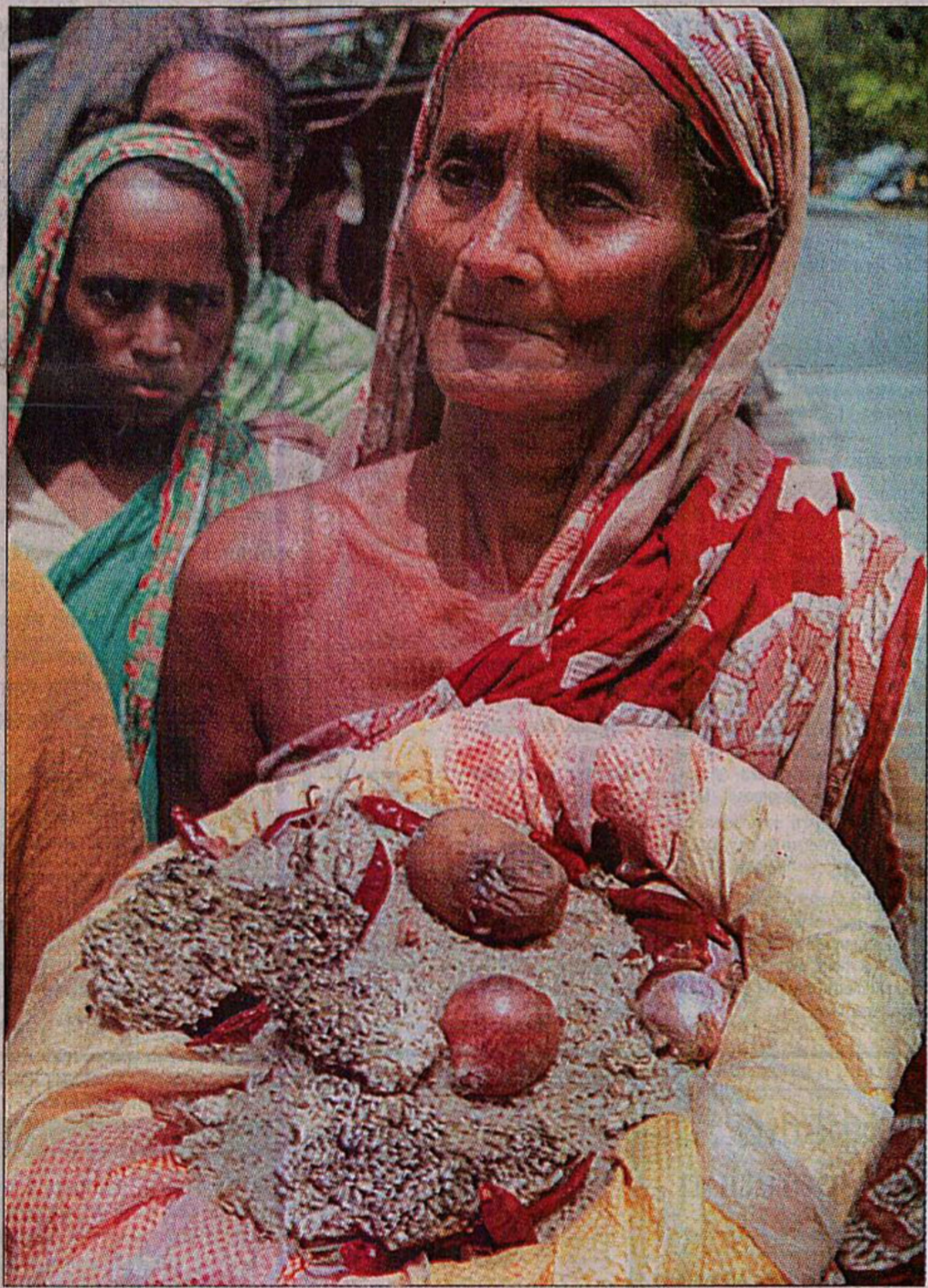


PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

A flabbergasted Nesa Banu, 65, of Falshatia village of Manikganj district shows journalists inedible, rotten rice and potato she received at Mahadebpur relief camp in Ghior yesterday. Allegations of irregularities in relief distribution at the camps in the district are widespread.

PM finally seeks int'l assistance

UN prepares to appeal to world for flood aid

NEWS DESK

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia yesterday sought international assistance for post-flood rehabilitation work.

Her call came while visiting the flood-affected areas of Chandpur and Brahmanbaria districts, according to the BSS.

The prime minister said the current floods have damaged property and infrastructures worth thousands of crores of taka and it may not be possible for the govern-

ment alone to recoup the losses.

Therefore, we need international assistance for rebuilding the infrastructure and homesteads and helping agricultural rehabilitation, she said.

In response, the United Nations (UN) yesterday announced that it would launch an appeal for relief and rehabilitation of the flood-hit people.

The announcement said that the UN, in consultation with the Ministry of Food and Disaster

Management, would embark on preparations for an international appeal, which will be launched within the coming weeks.

The United Nations agencies in Bangladesh under the leadership of the Resident Coordinator have activated the UN Disaster Management Team (UNDMT) to assess the impact of the floods. And the government is also assessing the damages.

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Spurious rice saline hits the market

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Adulterated rice powder saline packets are being sold in local markets which are stated to be ineffective and may lead to serious health hazard, the employees of International Center for Diarrhoeal Diseases Research Bangladesh (ICDDR, B) alleged yesterday.

"We carried out a market survey and found the adulterated rice powder saline packets which may cause even death to diarrhoeal patients," said S S M A Hamidur Rahman, chairman of ICDDR, B Employees' Multipurpose Co-operative Society at a press conference at its auditorium at Mohakhali in the city.

He also said mass awareness is key to preventing sale of such saline packets.

"Our scientists examined several brands of the adulterated rice powder saline packets and found that the percentage of sodium, chloride and potassium in these packets is very low and taking such saline by patients will be useless," said MA

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WB okays \$200m loans for reforms

Conditions include gas, power tariff hike, launch of anti-graft body

REJAUUL KARIM BYRON

The World Bank (WB) has approved a \$200 million loan for reform programmes on condition that the government increase gas and power tariffs and immediately launch a fully-staffed anti-corruption commission.

With the loan, the government will implement the macroeconomic framework agreed under the IMF-supported Poverty Reduction and Growth Facility (PRGF), provide support for privatising some nationalised commercial banks (NCBs), downsizing the state-owned enterprises (SoEs) and pay for retirement of workers.

In granting the loan styled 'Development Support Credit-2', the WB has shifted from its earlier stance on privatising the SoEs. It has now agreed to a government proposal to downsize five to 10 SoEs

each year out of a total of 100 manufacturing SoEs.

The government is unwilling to privatise the SoEs before the election. After coming to power, the BNP-led coalition has retrenched

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Floodwaters in Dhaka may not recede in month

Fears disaster management minister

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Relief and Disaster Management Minister Chowdhury Kamal Ibne Yusuf yesterday said floodwaters in Dhaka and its adjacent districts may not recede shortly and apprehended the flood may linger in the areas even for a month.

"Experts told me that floodwaters in Dhaka and nearby areas may linger for next two to four weeks," the minister said at an opinion-sharing meeting organised by Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) on floods in the city.

Housing and Public Works Minister Mirza Abbas and Deputy

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2 robbers die, 5 cops hurt in gunbattle

BSS, Cox's Bazar

Two robbers were killed and five policemen injured in a gunfight between police and robbers yesterday at Panirchhara, a remote forest, 90 kilometres from the district headquarters.

The gunfight took place when a 70 member strong contingent of Cox's Bazar police cordoned a hide-out of an organised gang of robbers

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Asia Cup

Tigers take on Pakistan today

AL MUSABBIR SADI, from Colombo

Bangladesh will get one last chance to prove that they can be competitive when the Tigers take on outgoing champions Pakistan in the final

super league match of the eighth Asia Cup at the Premadasa Stadium here today.

The day-night match starts at 2.40 pm. Bangladesh Television and

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Outlaws threaten 4 Barisal journo

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barisal

Outlaws have sent letters to four journalists of Barisal with death threats yesterday.

The letters signed "Azrail" were sent to Kazi Nasiruddin Babul editor of Dainik Ajker Barta, Syed Dulal editor of Dainik Ajker Paribarton, M A Matin editor of Dainik Dakkhinanchal and Akter Faruk Shahin who is the news editor of Dainik Ajker Barta and Barisal correspondent of The Daily Star. The letters were all received through mail within the last 36 hours.

The sender expressed his extreme anger about the publication of reports concerning the activities of the outlawed "Sarbohara Party" in the letters. The sender threatened to blow up the journalists and their homes with explosives and also informed the journalists that the "Sarbohara Party" was following their activities. "Have

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Suicide car bomb kills 68 Iraqis

AP, Baghdad

A suicide car bomb exploded outside a police recruiting centre in central Baqouba yesterday, killing 68 Iraqis and turning the city's busy streets into a bloody tangle of twisted metal and bodies.

The attack, which killed 21 people inside a passing bus, was the deadliest bombing in Iraq since the United States transferred sovereignty to an interim government on June 28.

The bombing was part of an intense surge in violence over the past 24 hours: 35 insurgents and seven Iraqi police were killed in clashes southeast of Baghdad, a U.S. soldier was killed in a bomb attack, and a police officer was assassinated.

Iraqi officials -- who said they

expected attacks to intensify as the country tries to edge toward democracy -- feared a key national conference scheduled for Saturday would be a major target for attack.

"The terrorists' goal is to hamper the police work, terrorise our citizens and show that the government is unable to protect the Iraqi people, and this will not happen," said Hamid al-Beyati, a deputy foreign minister.

The 10:13 a.m. bombing in Baqouba, a turbulent city 35 miles northeast of Baghdad, shattered the bustling heart of a commercial district filled with shops, fruit stands, government buildings and the police station.

The street was filled with charred vehicles, pieces of glass, twisted metal and abandoned shoes, all

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Date & Venue : July 31, 9:30 a.m. - 6:00 p.m. at Hotel Sarina, (5th Floor, Conference Room)
August 3, 10:00 a.m. - 6:00 p.m. at CCCI Conference Room
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