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Floodwaters recede further

Major rivers still above danger levels; diarrhoea in fresh areas; millions wait for food, shelter

STAR REPORT

Rivers continued to fall in a sign of improvement in the flood situation, but the death count in monsoon flooding mounted as diarrhoea and skin diseases rampaged through new areas, including Dhaka.

As many as 7,000 people were taken ill with diarrhoea and other waterborne diseases that also killed at least three in the last 24 hours, according to the health directorate.

The disaster management ministry recorded that 16 more people died in flood-related incidents, bringing the death toll to 489 in three weeks, while unconfirmed reports put the figure at 500, official news agency BSS said.

Water levels in five rivers around the capital went an average of 7 cm down, triggering slight recession of floodwaters from the south and southwestern fringes, but the plight of people on the waterlogged eastern fringe continues.

The army and local volunteers sandbagged 100 points of Dhaka-Narayanganj-Demra (DND) embankment where water gushed through.

About half a million people crammed into flood shelters or were living on rooftops and many more clung to their inundated houses. Traffic tended to keep off Gulshan-1-Tejgaon and Gulshan-1-Mohakhali roads, as filthy water logs two points on both roads.

The Water Development Board, Water and Sewerage Authority and locals are pumping floodwaters and sewage out of many areas by 104

pumps -- an effort that contributed a little to easing the pressure of waterlogging.

Talking to The Daily Star, flood victims who took refuge in flood shelters in 55 wards of the capital asked for more relief and said they were not getting enough.

Non-governmental and socio-cultural organisations distributing relief in the capital called on the government to provide more relief.

BSS said at least 1,026 patients contracted diarrhoea in Dhaka and 515 of them were admitted to the ICDDR,B (International Centre for Diarrhoeal Diseases and Research, Bangladesh) alone yesterday.

Swirling waters have also caused billions of dollars of damage to bridges, homes, roads, rail lines, communication links and businesses, Reuters said.

Millions were homeless or remained stranded in their homes or on the roofs of partly submerged houses and buildings, waiting for food, fresh water and other relief items.

RIVERS FALL
The Brahmaputra-Jamuna and the Ganges-Padma continued to fall further and most rivers in the Meghna and the southeastern hill basins were also falling.

The floods in Sylhet, Sunamganj, Moulvibazar, Netrakona, Pabna, Mymensingh, Sirajganj, Manikganj, Tangail, Madaripur, Rajbari, Shariatpur, Gopalganj, Narsingdi, Kishoreganj and Brahmanbaria are likely to improve further, flood

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Children share a plate of khichuri one of them got in relief at a flood shelter in Kamalapur Stadium yesterday. Monsoon flooding has swamped low-lying areas in Dhaka and most parts of Bangladesh over the weeks.

PHOTO STAR

Diarrhoea spreading fast, 3 more die

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Diarrhoea is spreading fast in the flood-hit areas of the country claiming three lives and attacking 6,989 people in 24 hours till 6:00 pm yesterday, health directorate sources said.

In the capital alone, 1,026 cases of diarrhoea attacks were reported during the same time.

Death toll from the water-borne disease rose to 30 and the number of

attacks totalled 40,561 till yesterday as the devastating deluge swamped about two-thirds of the country. Contaminated drinking water led to outbreak of the disease, the sources mentioned.

An increasing number of diarrhoea patients are crowding city hospitals. But the hospitals are finding it difficult to cope with the rush of patients due to their limited facilities.

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Weavers face wrath of floods

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

About 15 lakh weavers are passing their days in fear of financial insecurity, as the handloom industry has become apparently inert since the onset of the floods.

Besides, 4,000 weavers are facing additional sufferings for many years as the government had filed certificate cases against them to realise Tk 25-crore default loan.

Against this backdrop, the Handloom Weavers Organisation (BUP), a research organisation, held the briefing at the Jatiya Press Club

'Another flood spell in mid-August'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Yet another spell of devastating flood may hit the country in the middle of August before the recession of current flood waters and linger on for a month aggravating the situation further, experts warned yesterday at a press briefing.

Bangladesh Unnayan Parishad (BUP), a research organisation, held the briefing at the Jatiya Press Club

lounge.

BUP experts quoting climate forecasts said 50 percent more rainfall than usual is likely from July 29 to August 8 in Brahmaputra and Ganges basins.

"If occurs, onrush of waters will inundate many parts of the country before the recession of the present deluge," said BUP Chairman Kazi Khuliquzzaman Ahmad.

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BIMST-EC summit begins

APP, Bangkok

The first leadership summit of the BIMSTEC group of seven Asian nations representing 1.3 billion people started talks in Thailand's capital yesterday as analysts cast doubt over its long-term economic prospects.

The talks were designed to provide a much-needed drive towards the goal of free trade by 2017 after a hesitant start for a group designed to bridge the gap between the nations of South and Southeast Asia.

The gathering is big on symbolism but trade within the group represents only 7.3 billion dollars, or four percent of their total trade, and tariff negotiations are not due to start until later this year.

The seven -- Bangladesh, India, Myanmar, Sri Lanka, Thailand and new members Bhutan and Nepal -- are to use the summit to draw up a "roadmap" to navigate the course towards the opening of markets and promote trade.

Analysts played down the significance of the meeting and warned much needed to be done to tap the trading potential of the two areas.

Prapat Thepcharree, director of Thailand's Centre for International Policy Studies, said: "The (Thai) government would like to promote this into a very big event. But for me, as an observer, this kind of grouping

SEE PAGE 11 COL 1

Asia Cup final tomorrow

APP, Colombo

Sourav Ganguly's India go into Sunday's Asia Cup final against hosts Sri Lanka determined to overcome a jinx that has seen them stumble more often than not at the last hurdle of one-day tournaments.

In the last 12 one-day competitions featuring more than two teams, Ganguly's men lost the final nine times -- including last year's World Cup in South Africa -- and shared the trophy twice.

Their lone success came in the enthralling NatWest final at Lord's in 2002 when they successfully chased hosts England's 325 after being reduced to 146-5.

A similar commitment will be needed if India are to put it across a confident home team in the day-night final at the Prectadada Stadium before 25,000 partisan fans.

In two previous matches against Sri Lanka in the tournament, the Indians lost the first game by 12 runs before squeezing home in the second by four runs to knock arch-rivals Pakistan out of the tournament.

"We have not been at our best in the first tournament of the season, but now have a chance to make amends," Ganguly said.

"Sri Lanka are tough to beat at home, but we did exactly that five

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PHOTO STAR

The supporters of BNP candidate MA Mannan and main opposition Awami League candidate Zahid Ahsan Russell, right, hold public rallies in Gazipur-2 constituency yesterday before campaign closed midnight last night.

Biman flight takes off from Frankfurt after bomb scare

REUTERS, Frankfurt

A passenger jet belonging to Biman Bangladesh Airlines has been searched and pronounced safe after being grounded by a bomb threat, and has taken off from Frankfurt airport, German police said yesterday.

The jet bound for the Bangladeshi capital of Dhaka was searched and its passengers checked after an anonymous bomb threat was received as it taxied to take off on Thursday.

"The plane departed overnight, nothing was found," a spokesman for the German Federal Border Guard at Frankfurt airport said.

There was no information on how the bomb threat was made.

Gazipur by-polls tomorrow

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Ruling alliance leader BNP and the main opposition Awami League (AL) staged huge show-downs ahead of Gazipur-2 parliamentary by-polls tomorrow.

On the last day of campaigning yesterday, both the BNP and the AL brought out processions and staged rallies at Tongi and Joydevpur in an effort to swing votes.

The second largest constituency with 46,293 voters fell vacant at the assassination of AL lawmaker Ahsanullah Master at a rally in Tongi on May 7.

Eight candidates are contesting the polls, but analysts say the main fight will be limited between ruling coalition candidate Prof MA Mannan and his key challenger Zahid Ahsan Russell of the AL. Russell is the eldest son of

Ahsanullah.

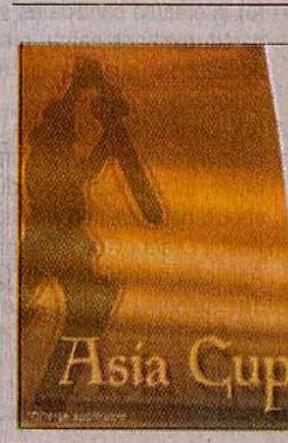
Ahsanullah was elected lawmaker in 1996 and 2001 and Mannan in 1991 from the seat.

Two huge public rallies at busy highway by the key ruling and the

main opposition party caused traffic congestion much to the sufferings of thousands of commuters.

BNP Secretary General Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan along with other

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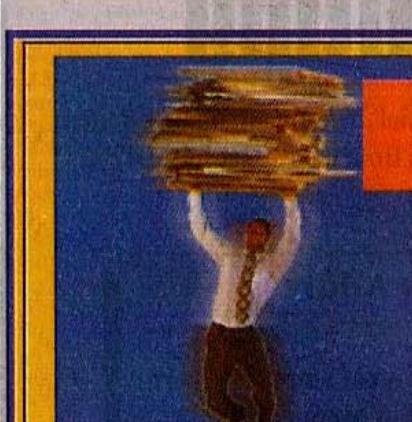
HASINA ALLEGES AL men barred from carrying out relief work

UNB, Dhaka

Awami League (AL) President Sheikh Hasina yesterday accused the BNP-led alliance government of failure to face the flood disaster in the country and not allowing leaders and workers of her party to conduct relief activities for the flood-hit.

"The floods have opened up a new avenue of income for the BNP-Jamaat looters... Hoodlums of the ruling alliance are collecting toll from relief-carrying vehicles, businesses and other people even at this critical period," she said.

Hasina, also leader of the opposition in parliament, made the allegations while addressing the



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