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CPD fights war of words with govt, UN over damage figures

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD), the government and the UN fought a war of words yesterday over flood-damage assessment, dismissing each other's figures as baseless and incredible.

"Projecting exaggerated figures will bring no benefit to Bangladesh. We could find no basis of their assessment," said Dr Debapriya Bhattacharya, executive director of the CPD on the government and UN assessment of \$6.6 billion in flood damage while presenting their "Rapid Assessment of Flood 2004" yesterday.

"They have no transparent methodology in going about assessing the sectoral damages," said Debapriya. The assessment did not differentiate between public and private sector damages, which would have implications on financing of rehabilitation.

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## UN seeks \$210m in flood aid

Lissner not confident of favourable donor response

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The United Nations (UN) yesterday launched a flash appeal for \$210 million to the world community to help 33 million flood victims in Bangladesh for the next six months, but UN Resident Coordinator Jorgen Lissner was not confident of favourable donor response.

Lissner described the appeal as very modest in assisting people in the early stages of post-flood rehabilitation.

"UN could only appeal for \$210 million, as its local capacity would not permit a greater amount of donor assistance to be translated into relief," he said on the sidelines of the UN launch of its appeal at IDB Bhaban.

Lissner also said the amount

would break down to Tk 370 a flood victim, which is not enough, but was optimistic about separate government and NGO (non-governmental organisation) relief operations to fill the gaps.

The damage estimated at \$6.6 billion could be on the low side as the damage from the floods this year is much greater than in 1998 when the deluge damaged property and infrastructure in \$2 billion, Lissner said.

"We need more support" was the message sent by United Nations Children's Fund (Unicef) representative Morten Gjersing in a press release, reasoning that at least 1 million malnourished children are among the flood victims.

Asked by a donor representative if the donors should prepare to

provide more aid later, Food and Disaster Management Minister Chowdhury Kamal Ibne Yousuf, attending the launch, said the government would launch another appeal to donors for assistance after the flood-damage assessment was complete.

In an effort to solicit substantial contributions to the immediate relief and early recovery needs for the most vulnerable, the UN Country Team identified food, agriculture, health, nutrition, water, sanitation, family shelter, education, protection, economic recovery, infrastructure and management as urgent for the next six months.

The World Food Programme (WFP) asked for \$73 million to cover 5 million people and distribute

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The farmers of Deosar village in Munshiganj clean their vegetables farm yesterday after recession of floodwaters in the hope of re-planting their land and rebuilding life.

## CPD sees flood damage lower than claims

Says rehab operations can be funded by domestic resources

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD) yesterday put the flood damage estimate at Tk 11,418 crore or 3.4 percent of GDP and asked the government to adopt short- and

medium-term measures for a year.

The independent civil society think-tank says its initial damage estimate can rise to Tk 15,000 crore at the maximum. The UN had put the figure at \$7 billion and the

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## BURIGANGA BOAT CAPSIZE

## 7 bodies recovered

Locals shocked at police indifference

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Seven decomposed bodies, including one of a child, were recovered from the Buriganga River at Keraniganj yesterday, two days after a mechanised ferryboat had capsized at Sadarghat in the city.

Locals said the jam-packed boat overturned right before the law-enforcers on security duty for the prime minister's visit to Keraniganj Tuesday. But, police and Fire Brigade

and Civil Defence divers began rescue work only after the PM's visit had ended three and a half hours later.

The duty officer of Keraniganj Police Station said until 6:00pm yesterday they have recovered seven bodies from Hasnabad, about two kilometres downstream from Sadarghat.

Four of the dead were identified as Abeda Khatun, 30, her seven-year-old daughter Aduri, and

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## The neediest get the least

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

People in the most severely flood-affected districts received the lowest relief while those in the slightly damaged areas the highest.

For example, Sunamganj, one of the six districts most ravaged by flood, received a relief worth only Tk 11.79 per head while a comparatively less affected Laxmipur received as much as Tk 628.09.

"There is an inverse relationship between the amount of per capita relief distributed and the severity of flood," observed a report on the Flood Damage Intensity Index (FDII) released yesterday by the Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD).

The report revealed an array of discriminations and anomalies in relief distribution and management in the deluge-devastated areas.

The CPD, an independent think-tank of the country, prepared the

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## Explosives draw focus to borders

Nunu taken on fresh remand

JULFIKAR ALI MANIK, from Sylhet

Investigators are trying to find out the sources of the foreign-made grenade and homemade bombs used in recent Sylhet killings as interrogation of the suspects yielded no lead to the crime.

Sources linked to the probe said police and paramilitary Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) were asked to keep a close watch on Bangladesh's porous borders with the Indian states of Assam, Meghalaya and Tripura in the interest of the investigation.

But Deputy Inspector General (DIG) of Sylhet Police Ali Imam Chowdhury dismissed the claim, saying BDR watch on the borders was not related to the investigation,

but was a normal exercise.

A local court yesterday remanded Awami League (AL) leader Nunu Mia in six days of police custody after the expiry of three days of first remand.

The court asked the police not to inhumanly treat Nunu, who was taken there in fetters.

While leaving the court, Nunu told journalists that police subjected him to beating, electric shock and other forms of torture in custody in an attempt to extract a confessional statement from him.

"Am I a criminal that I'll confess to the crime?" he told reporters.

During the hearing of remand prayer, government counsel said

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## SYLHET BLASTS

AL demands int'l, judicial probes

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

Awami League (AL) President Sheikh Hasina has demanded international probe into the bomb blasts in Sylhet region and other places in

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## Certain quarter out to destabilise country: PM

UNB, Kurigram

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia yesterday said a particular quarter was trying to destabilise the country through carrying out subversive acts.

She called upon that quarter to

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## Battle rages on in Najaf, Baghdad

165 Iraqis, 2 GIs killed

AFP, Baghdad

US marines and warplanes spearheaded a massive two-pronged assault to crush a Shia Muslim uprising in Najaf and Baghdad yesterday, after 24 hours of nationwide fighting left 165 Iraqis dead and 600 wounded.

US jets screamed overhead as massive explosions and tank and machine-gun fire boomed through the holy city and smoke engulfed its historic centre, home to the Imam Ali shrine, revered by Shias all over the world.

US troops and Iraqi security forces quickly sealed approaches to the mausoleum, as hundreds of terrified residents, urged on by

attacking forces and the city's mosques, fled through the dusty streets.

"Leave the city. Help coalition forces and do not fire at them," one announcement instructed in Arabic. "We are here to liberate the city."

Armed militiamen fanned out into the deserted plaza outside the shrine as mosques urged the Mehdi Army to defy the onslaught and defend the city, while US tanks took up positions on roads leading to the mausoleum.

US forces, backed by Iraqi police and national guard, mounted a pincer movement to trap militia leader Moqtada Sadr's fighters in

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